

1995

Downtown Master Plan for Lee, Massachusetts

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**DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN
LEE, MASSACHUSETTS**

SPRING 1995

**THE DEPARTMENT OF
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE AND REGIONAL PLANNING
THE UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AT AMHERST**

**REGIONAL PLANNING STUDIO
SPRING 1995**

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1. Introduction

This Master Plan was commissioned by Lee Economic Action for the Downtown (L.E.A.D. Inc.), a non-profit community development corporation, composed of Lee merchants and residents. L.E.A.D. was organized in 1993 by State Representative Christopher Hodgkins, to promote physical and economic improvements for the Downtown. A Master Plan for Downtown Lee provides a framework to deal with the challenges of future local and regional development. This Master Plan is intended to be the basis for preserving and enhancing the unique character of Downtown Lee. Market forces exist which are beyond the control of well-meaning planners, administrators and this Master Plan. Although preserving the physical character of the community is a realistic and attainable goal, keeping the Downtown's present economic environment intact may prove difficult.

Lee's Downtown is bounded by High Street to the east, Park Street to the south, and the Housatonic River to the west and north. Adjacent neighborhoods, such as Housatonic Street, clearly have an impact on the Downtown but are not elements of this study. For the purpose of this plan the Downtown was divided into ten study areas (See Chapter VIII).

Unlike other downtowns in the region, Lee's Downtown is proudly referred to as a "real downtown" by residents and visitors alike. It is a unique place with a special character which residents wish to retain. It is not only a place where one can shop and do business, but it is a community center in the truest sense. Downtown Lee provides opportunities for recreation,

socializing and gathering. It is composed of diverse elements which are interdependent; together they create a sense of community character.

The physical elements of Downtown (buildings, sidewalks, open space, the river, parking lots, landscaping, and streetscapes) have been defined by L.E.A.D. as the critical areas in need of immediate study. Many programs dealing with the physical elements of the Downtown are already underway or are in the planning stages (See Chapter IV). It is critical to develop a framework which incorporates these programs, while providing a guide for future public and private development.

Creation of this Master Plan involved contacting professionals, officials, residents, and others affiliated with Downtown Lee to ensure that local concerns were included (See Appendix A). Comparable communities were researched to determine effective methods for enhancing and preserving community character(Chapter III).

Recommendations will enable Downtown Lee to coordinate current programs with anticipated future needs. The recommendations outlined in this Master Plan will provide an impetus for further discussion, investigation, and action on the part of L.E.A.D., Town Officials, the Downtown community and the citizens of Lee.

1.2. Overall goals

The overall goals of this Master Plan are:

- 1. To preserve and enhance the character of the Downtown.**
- 2. To prepare the Downtown for change.**

The Master Plan focuses on the following areas of concentration as a means to achieve the overall goals:

- **Community Character**
- **The River, Open Space, Parking and Linkages**
- **Economic Development**

These areas are addressed in Chapters V, VI and VII, respectively.

Chapter V, "Community Character", introduces the following goals and objectives:

- 1. Preserve the historic and architectural resources of the Downtown.**
 - Expand the existing historic district.
 - Establish a set of physical and aesthetic guidelines.
 - Identify funding sources for historic preservation.
- 2. Maintain a mix of civic, cultural and community-oriented uses and activities.**
 - Maintain and encourage the present mixed-use character of the Downtown.
 - Encourage community activities in the Downtown.
- 3. Enhance and beautify the Downtown's natural and open space resources.**
 - Ensure all open space realizes its full potential for public benefit and use.
 - Identify funding sources for open space resources.
- 4. Encourage citizen participation and awareness.**
 - Encourage the participation of the public in preserving community character.

The primary goal in Chapter VI, "The River, Open Space, Parking and Linkages", is to develop a pedestrian and open space linkage system for the Downtown. The following goals and objectives provide a basis to establish this network:

1. Emphasize and increase the role of the Housatonic River within the Downtown.

- Protect and enhance the river and its environs, scenic vistas and open spaces.

2. Establish a system of pedestrian and visual linkages.

- Landscape and upgrade the elements of the proposed linkage system.
- Optimize the present uses of open space.
- Educate the public on natural resource issues related to the Downtown.
- Encourage public and private initiatives.

3. Maximize the efficiency of existing parking and develop a plan for meeting future needs.

- Redesign and reorganize the Railroad Street municipal lot.
- Incorporate parking into the overall linkage system.

Chapter VII, "Economic Development", includes the following goals:

1. Preserve and maintain existing businesses in the Downtown.

- Encourage business retention.
- Establish a merchants association.
- Establish a Community Development Corporation for the Downtown.

2. Encourage new business opportunities in the Downtown.

- Undertake an economic development and market analysis for the Downtown.

3. Maintain and promote a variety of mixed-use development opportunities that will support and enhance the Downtown.

- Use existing commercial and residential properties to enhance the Downtown.
- Encourage new construction to meet additional Downtown needs.
- Ensure that new development conforms to the existing character of the Downtown.
- Adopt necessary tools and techniques

For the purposes of this study the Downtown has been divided up into ten districts. A matrix of recommendations for each district is located in Chapter VIII. Chapter IX analyzes the design review process and its applicability to Lee's Downtown.

1.3. Conclusions

The Master Plan's principle conclusions are to:

- 1. Establish a design review process .**
- 2. Extend the historic district to include areas in the north and south ends of the Downtown.**
- 3. Create an overall linkage system which will connect pedestrian passages, traffic networks and open space areas within the Downtown.**
- 4. Continue to investigate funding sources to finance Downtown improvements and programs.**
- 5. Encourage the increased participation of the general public in the Downtown planning process.**

II. INTRODUCTION

2.1. Overview

The Lee Economic Action for the Downtown (L.E.A.D.) is a non-profit corporation composed of citizens and merchants, organized by local resident and State Representative Christopher Hodgkins to preserve and enhance the physical, economic and social aspects of Downtown Lee. The graduate studio in Regional Planning at the Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst has contracted with L.E.A.D. to prepare a Master Plan for the Downtown. The goals of this Master Plan are twofold:

- 1. To preserve and enhance the character of the Downtown.** This involves defining the character of the Downtown, analyzing the elements that make up that character and finding ways to preserve and enhance it by integrating current improvement programs with proposed recommendations.
- 2. To prepare the Downtown for change.** The community must have the ability to respond to development pressures in accordance with the primary goal of retaining the character of Downtown Lee. The Master Plan will provide the Downtown with the necessary tools and techniques to accomplish this task.

The Master Plan concentrates on three main areas which address these primary goals:

- **Community Character**
- **The River, Open Space, Parking and Linkages**
- **Economic Development**

2.2. Project Context

L.E.A.D. is in the first year of a three year Downtown Partnership Program funded by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts' Executive Office of Community Development (E.O.C.D.). As part of this program, L.E.A.D. has hired a professional planner, Richard Beatty, as its Downtown Manager. His job is to direct L.E.A.D. and oversee planning and improvement programs which have an impact on the Downtown. L.E.A.D. has obtained a number of grants in order to implement a variety of improvement projects aimed at the preservation and economic enhancement of Downtown Lee. The following is a list of programs which are either underway, scheduled to begin in the near future, or in the planning stages:

1. A Streetscape Improvement Project consisting of pedestrian and landscape improvements, as well as A.D.A. (Americans with Disabilities Act) access to buildings along Main Street.
2. A Historic Restoration Program designed to restore the facades of individual buildings in the Downtown.
3. The Main Street program and Massachusetts E.O.C.D. downtown network.
4. A Visioning Workshop to define objectives and goals for L.E.A.D. and the Downtown as a whole.
5. An economic market analysis for both the Downtown and the region.
6. A traffic and parking analysis for the Downtown area, incorporating impacts from nearby development projects or potential development.

7. Planning coordination with the Conservation Commission, Housatonic River Initiative, Lee Land Trust and others to improve Downtown open space.
8. Coordination with private development to meet overall design and economic goals.

The Master Plan will unite the various improvement programs currently underway and will provide a framework for further public and private investment.

2.3. Methods

The Master Plan was developed in the following stages:

1. Defining the scope of the Master Plan. This involved targeting the area of study, and defining the specific products needed. Methods for problem solving were researched and developed.
2. Analyzing previous studies and projects for the Downtown.
3. Researching local and regional data, including contacting key people in Lee and in the region, attending town meetings and the visioning workshop.
4. Researching tools and techniques used by comparable communities to preserve and enhance their respective downtowns. Development and design guidelines were analyzed to determine how other communities deal with issues of community character.
5. Establishing a set of goals, objectives and recommendations based on the collected data.

The Master Plan concentrates on the physical aspects of the Downtown but also addresses other areas of concern, such as economic development and recreation. It is important to note that this Master Plan is not meant to be a legal document. However, it is hoped that the research and resulting recommendations included in the Master Plan will be helpful to L.E.A.D. and the community of Lee to preserve its Downtown character.

III. BACKGROUND

3.1. The Region

The industrial mills which were once the economic backbone of the Berkshires have experienced economic decline over the past two decades. According to census data, the population of 20-30 year olds has decreased regionally as young people have left, seeking employment in other areas. The mills and associated industries have been replaced by an expanding tourist and second home industry. Summer activities in places such as Tanglewood, the summer home of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, draw thousands of visitors to the region. In addition to Tanglewood, other attractions include Jacob's Ladder, a progressive dance theater, Shakespeare and Company at the Edith Wharton homestead, other theater groups and the Norman Rockwell Museum.

Responding to the increase in tourism, many of the towns, especially along the Route 7 corridor, have been developed or redeveloped to attract tourist dollars. Outlet centers and strip malls have emerged along the major roadways. These attempts to cater to the needs and desires of seasonal tourism, has often resulted in sprawl. Towns in the region are losing their original character and sense of place in the process. In some cases this has occurred due to the absence of a coherent plan to control development. It is the aim of this Master Plan to provide guidance and a framework for future growth.

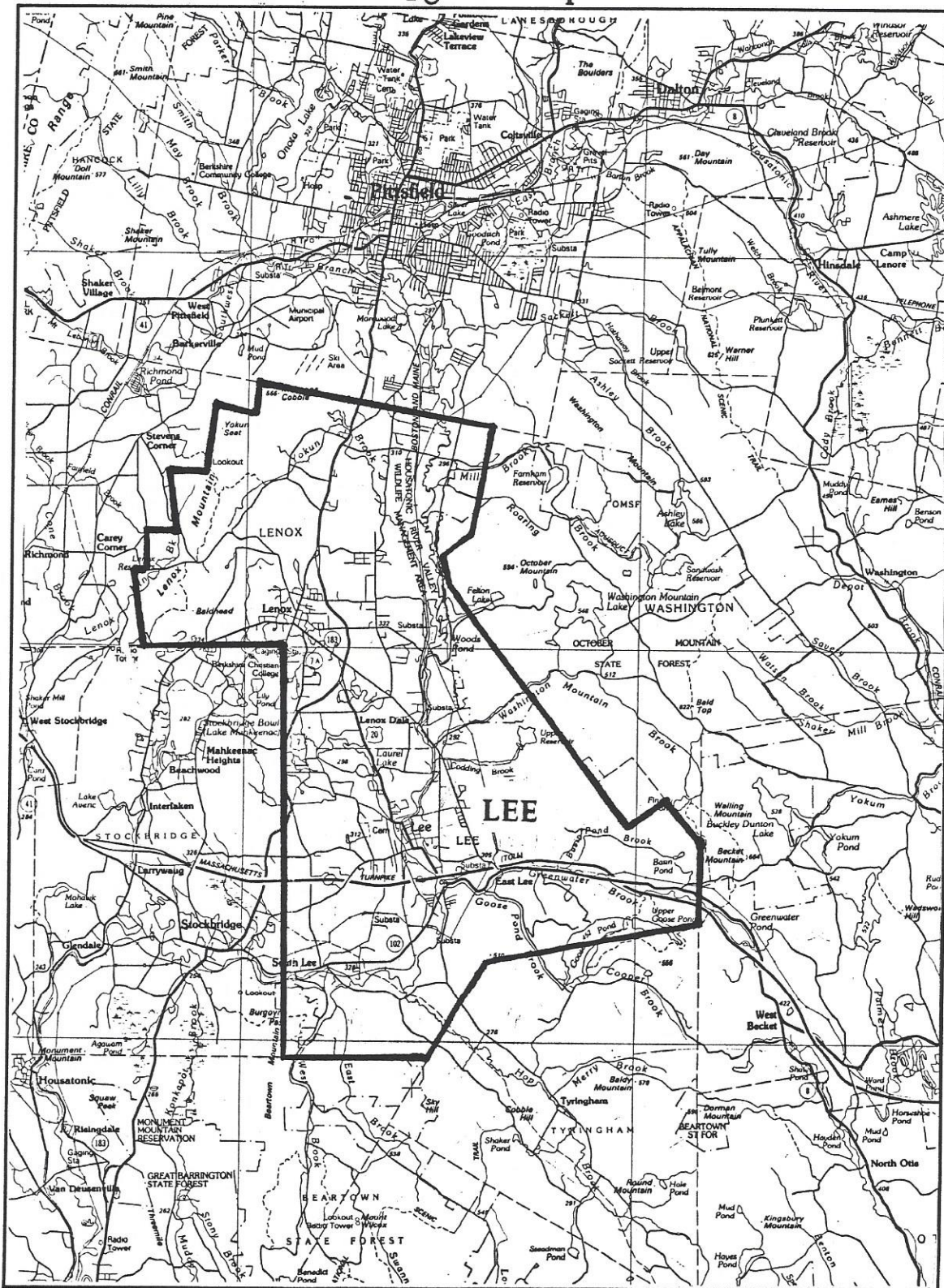
3.2. Lee

Lee was incorporated as a town in 1777. It is bordered by Tyringham and Great Barrington to the south, Lenox on the northwest, Becket on the east, Washington on the northeast, and Stockbridge on the west (see Figure 1). Lee is nine miles south of Pittsfield, one hundred and twenty two miles west of Boston and one hundred and thirty eight miles from New York City. Lee occupies a total area of 27.03 square miles and has a population of 5,849.

Lee is identified as the "Gateway to the Berkshires", due to its location in the heart of the Southern Berkshires and its proximity to Interstate 90 and Route 7. The landmark Congregational Church in Downtown has one of the tallest wooden church steeples in the country. Lee is also famed for its high quality white marble which is used in several Downtown public buildings, as well as in architectural details and retaining walls, locally and throughout the United States. Like many of the towns in the region, Lee is an old mill town with a rich heritage in the paper industry. Kimberley Clark and Mead Paper are two of the largest employers in the town and contribute significantly to its industrial base.

Lee's Downtown is distinguished from other downtowns in the region by its authenticity. The Downtown retains a strong sense of community and character which is valued by the residents of Lee, people in the region and visitors to the Berkshires. Downtown Lee is a place where one can perform daily activities. Within the Downtown there is a great variety of civic and community uses serving local needs. These include the Town Hall, municipal services, a Post Office, elderly housing, a youth center, a supermarket, a variety of retail and commercial establishments serving the

Figure 1
Regional Map



local residents; a lumber yard, a renowned diner, a five and dime store, and a pharmacy with a soda fountain. Main Street, Route 20, is a regional corridor which provides a constant stream of traffic flowing through the Downtown. The region is experiencing increasing demands on its transportation infrastructure, as evidenced by the increase in traffic along Main Street. The Berkshire Regional Planning Agency has recently proposed a by-pass on the Route 7 interchange at Stockbridge. Although Lee is no longer being considered as a possible site for a north-south by-pass, the effects of this decision on the Downtown remain to be seen.

A quintessential New England town common defines the southern entrance to Downtown Lee. Main Street properties with mature landscaping add to the beauty of the Downtown and enhance the streetscape. The Housatonic River runs through the western edge of the Downtown and provides both recreational opportunities and a natural water element. An active railroad freight line, runs parallel to the river, from the north end of Lee through the center of town, to points south and west. It serves the local Downtown lumber yard and other industries including the paper mills. A scenic railway, which connects to surrounding towns, is inactive at present. Reactivating this service would be recreationally and economically beneficial to the Downtown.

Downtown Lee is fortunate to possess an abundance of resources and opportunities. It has not been designed to attract tourists or to maximize commercial space, but rather to respond to the needs of the local population.

Lee is experiencing the same development pressures that are affecting the rest of the region. Due to its location at exit 2 of the Massachusetts Turnpike, and its favorable proximity to Routes 20 and 7, Lee is highly attractive to outside commercial development. In 1994, a proposed WalMart on the perimeter of town was denied. Local voters approved the plan by a 2/3 majority, but it didn't materialize due to a combination of environmental constraints and opposition by Downtown merchants. Many developers have followed suit, proposing a variety of strip malls and other retail and commercial ventures within the boundaries of Lee. The most significant of these ventures has been the recent approval of a 58 unit retail factory outlet village to be located one mile from Downtown, just south of exit 2 of I-90. It is fortunate that this development is a well planned facility rather than a strip mall. The developers are working closely with the Town to reduce the negative impacts and provide support to the Downtown. It is likely that the development will have significant effects on the economy of Downtown Lee. A Master Plan is a needed tool to ensure that future development enhances rather than erodes Downtown Lee's community character.

3.3. Comparable Communities

Plans from communities comparable to Lee were researched and analyzed.

These communities include:

1. Brattleboro, Vermont
2. Northampton, Massachusetts
3. Coventry, Connecticut
4. Amherst, Massachusetts
5. Easthampton, Massachusetts
6. Holyoke, Massachusetts

3.3.1. Brattleboro

Brattleboro's town plan was published in 1992. The town is located in Southern Vermont on the Connecticut River. Similar to Lee, the paper industry plays a significant role in their economy. The construction of Interstate 91 in the 1960's resulted in new development pressures on the town. The town has a number of significant historical structures which have been listed in the state and national historic registers. The downtown includes a diversity of uses which cater both to local and visitor needs. Brattleboro has successfully preserved its physical character through design guidelines and zoning by-laws (Brattleboro Planning Services Department, 1992).

A major purpose of their plan is to guide growth in an orderly pattern by providing management strategies for environmental protection, public facilities and services, economic development and a quality of life desired by the community. Additionally, it identifies strategies for perpetuating the town's historical character and cultural diversity.

3.3.2. Northampton

Northampton is located in Hampshire County. The downtown is host to a diversity of uses. This promotes a lively downtown central business district which has developed its own market niche, serving local and regional needs. Northampton's original master plan was written in 1972. This plan is now being updated.

Nineteenth century buildings dominate the downtown, which retains the architectural features and pedestrian scale of that period. Most of the downtown is in a National Historic Register district which protects its historic

integrity. Forty-one percent of Northampton residents live within a one-mile radius of downtown. This is an important element contributing to the downtown's health. The Northampton Downtown Plan is designed: to help ensure the downtown's continued success; to preserve its importance to the city; and to ensure that the downtown and the surrounding neighborhoods remain desirable places to shop, work, visit and live, for all Northampton residents and visitors (Northampton Planning Department, 1995).

3.3.3. Coventry

Coventry is located at the eastern end of Route I-384 and is a prime target for suburban expansion from Hartford. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Coventry was a thriving mill village. This economic base has changed. However, their downtown remains largely intact and reflects the rich architectural heritage of its past. A preservation plan was developed in 1990 to cope with development pressures as well as to preserve and enhance the village's rural character, historical elements and natural features. The main objectives in the Coventry Preservation Plan are to preserve, protect and enhance the historic character of the village, while developing a framework to allow for future economic growth (Preservation Planning Associates, 1990).

3.3.4. Amherst

Amherst is located in Hampshire county. It is home to three colleges: the University of Massachusetts, Amherst College and Hampshire College. Similar to Lee, Amherst has a distinctive downtown common, buildings of historical significance and growth pressures from surrounding areas. Its downtown design guidelines ensure that new construction and rehabilitation

of existing structures are consistent with the physical character of the downtown (Town of Amherst, 1987).

Over the past decade, several businesses which serve local needs, such as a hardware store and supermarket, have relocated from the downtown to outlying areas. This has been a hardship for some residents (especially the elderly) living in the downtown, who were accustomed to walking to these stores. Amherst's downtown design guidelines have successfully preserved and enhanced the Town's physical character. However, market forces, beyond the control of any guidelines, have changed it to a place which no longer serves local needs as it once did.

3.3.5. Easthampton

Easthampton, located in Hampshire County has a rich industrial heritage. Its industrial base, like that in many other mill towns in Western Massachusetts has declined over the past decade. Its downtown has a diverse municipal/business/religious mix serving local needs. Many of the buildings in the downtown reflect their late-nineteenth century origins. Recently, the town has experienced development pressures from large retailers who are interested in locating on the outskirts of the downtown. The purposes of the Easthampton Master Plan are: encourage commercial and industrial development in a way that will fit into local and regional needs; promote aspects of the town which provide its unique small town character; establish and expand public and private cooperation; and promote citizen participation in the implementation of this plan and in future planning efforts (LandUse, Incorporated, 1987).

3.3.6. Holyoke

Located on the Connecticut River in northern Hampden County, the city of Holyoke was the first planned industrial city in America. In the late nineteenth century, paper was the dominant industry and Holyoke was known as the "Paper City of the World." The majority of its downtown buildings were constructed between 1878 and 1920. Despite a severe economic decline since the 1950's, the downtown, due partly to its design review process, retains the character of its Victorian heritage. Its Design Review Guidelines protect and preserve the historic architecture and physical character of the city (Pride, 1988). (Holyoke's economy, demographics and size are not comparable to Lee. However, it was included in this report on the basis of its excellent design guidelines for its downtown).

The communities chosen for purposes of comparison successfully dealt with issues similar to those facing Downtown Lee. Each community has attempted to preserve and enhance the character of its downtown in the face of impending changes. Amherst and Holyoke, while not comparable economically or demographically to Lee, were included because they have well written design guidelines which are applicable to Lee. All communities have devised strategies to protect the historic resources of their downtowns. The comparable communities provide real-life examples of what other municipalities have done to deal with some of the problems presently facing Lee.

IV. STUDIES AND IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMS

Previously conducted plans and studies which focused on Lee's Downtown were examined. These provide a background for the Master Plan.

4.1. Previous Studies

4.1.1. PositiveLee

A general study of the Downtown, "PositiveLee", was completed in 1981 by local architect, Robert MacIntosh (MacIntosh, 1981). The study primarily focused on the southern end of the Downtown where recommendations and redevelopment schemes were proposed. Some of the proposed concepts, such as reconfiguring the parking area between Main Street and the river and developing a riverside greenway, remain as valid recommendations today and should be considered

4.1.2. Open Space and Recreation Plan 1989

This plan was prepared to analyze recreation needs for various population groups in Lee (Clemons and Larrivee, 1989). The following were recommended: expanding access to the Housatonic River for the public; constructing a walkway from the library on Main Street along Hyde Place, across Railroad Street, past the senior center, and straight to the river linking it with a riverside walkway; adding landscaping in the area of the Senior Center; establishing a Parks and Recreation Commission; reconfiguring the parking in the Railroad Street area for greater efficiency and aesthetics; developing a pocket park between the Post Office and the Airolodi Building and acquiring and protecting lands along the Housatonic River as part of the greenway plan.

4.1.3. Traffic and Parking Study

A traffic and parking study was conducted by the Massachusetts Department of Highways in January of 1992 (Paiewomsky and Bettencourt, 1992). This study concluded the pedestrian orientation of the Downtown, comprised of crosswalks, wide sidewalks and a concentration of commercial activities within a small area, creates conflicts between pedestrians and traffic.

Pedestrian signals at the crosswalks are recommended to reduce delays. Left turns from northbound Main Street to Eaton Street cause further delays during peak hours. A northbound left-turn lane is recommended on Main Street between the Park/Main Street intersection and Eaton Street for reasons of safety and efficiency. Angle parking, seen as needed by merchants, along the east side of Main Street, causes a minor delay in the flow of traffic. In general, traffic congestion in the Downtown is a seasonal problem.

4.2. Visioning Workshop

A visioning workshop, for community residents and representatives, was conducted by Hyett-Palma Associates March 3-5, 1995. The interactive sessions were designed to define and evaluate the needs and desires of the Downtown community, as well as to maximize the organization and effectiveness of L.E.A.D. and other Downtown organizations.

A study titled "Downtown Lee 1995 Action Plan" emerged from the visioning session (Palma, 1995). It recommends: increasing cooperation among Downtown users and merchants; developing a more prominent role for L.E.A.D.; mobilizing a Downtown Constituency to work with L.E.A.D. and to oversee enhancement programs; establishing a Promotions Committee, a Design Committee, an Economic Development Committee, a Funding

Committee and a Parking and Traffic Task Force to coordinate improvement efforts in the Downtown; ensuring that the Downtown remains as a mixed-use center and the hub of Lee's community life and incorporating Lee's heritage into any future programs or projects.

4.3. Programs

4.3.1. Streetscape Improvement Program

A streetscape improvement program to upgrade and enhance the existing sidewalks along Main Street is now underway. This involves redesigning the sidewalks to include brick paving, street lamps, trees, and street furniture. These enhancements will create an aesthetically pleasing and pedestrian-friendly environment. Sidewalks will be redesigned to meet A.D.A. (Americans with Disabilities Act) requirements. The construction of the first phase of the sidewalk program (from Park Street to Academy Street) began on April 1, 1995. Design work is underway for the remainder of Main Street, which is scheduled for completion October 1995.

4.3.2. Facade Restoration Program

A program under the direction of L.E.A.D., to restore the facades of historically significant buildings along Main Street, began in 1994. The program has been well received by building owners and the Town. The construction or design work is being completed on six buildings to date. Interest in the program continues to grow, and many requests and inquiries have been made to L.E.A.D. regarding this program.

4.4. Future Studies

4.4.1. Economic Market Analysis

An economic market analysis, contracted by L.E.A.D. and funded under a HUD 107 grant, will be performed by a consultant in 1995. The analysis will examine the present regional economic climate and will explore the development pressures facing Downtown Lee.

It is recommended that this study focus on the impact of the proposed Outlet Village and/or other development pressures on Lee. Downtown Lee must redefine and stabilize its market niche in the face of impending growth in order to achieve its goal of retaining a "real downtown".

4.4.2. Traffic and Parking Analysis

A traffic and parking analysis is planned for the Downtown in 1995. The parking study should cover issues such as parking needs, parking management and traffic flow. Current parking resources and needs should be analyzed to ensure maximum efficiency. One priority should be to conduct an origin and destination study. This will ascertain the extent to which the traffic-flow is local or regional. The development and implementation of a comprehensive parking plan is necessary to meet anticipated future demands. This study should be conducted by L.E.A.D. and the Town Traffic Commission, in coordination with other Downtown enhancement projects and studies.

The studies and programs analyzed in this section identified major issues which impact the Downtown. Many of the recommendations and ideas presented continue to have merit, and have been incorporated into this

Master Plan. Prior to expending resources on any future studies relating to the Downtown, it is advisable that the Town of Lee re-examine all relevant previous studies.

The subsequent chapters of the Master Plan present specific recommendations which address the following topics:

- **Community Character**
- **The River, Open Space and Linkages**
- **Economic Development**
- **The Design Guideline Process**

V. COMMUNITY CHARACTER

5.1. Introduction

It is important for Downtown Lee's community character to be preserved, for the Downtown to remain a "real" downtown, a "livable" downtown, a "compact" downtown and a downtown that has community "essentials" (Palma, 1995). Downtown Lee must nurture and capitalize on Lee's historical and architectural heritage, and its natural resources. It is these elements which make Downtown Lee authentic.

This section introduces four goals for maintaining the community character of the Downtown. These goals are:

- 1. Preserve the historic and architectural resources of the Downtown.**
- 2. Maintain a mix of civic, cultural and community-oriented uses and activities.**
- 3. Enhance and beautify the Downtown's natural and open space resources.**
- 4. Encourage citizen participation and awareness.**

Each goal is accompanied by a series of objectives which specify the means to achieve them.

5.2. Goal One

Preserve the historic and architectural resources of Downtown Lee.

5.3. Objectives

The following objectives should be used to achieve the goal of preserving the historical and architectural resources of the Downtown:

1. Expand the existing historic district.
2. Establish a set of physical and aesthetic guidelines.
3. Identify funding sources.

5.3.1. Expand the existing historic district.

1. Because the Downtown is on the National Historic Register, it is eligible for Federal rehabilitation funding; tax benefits for rehabilitation; limited protection from state or federal projects that may damage historical properties and recognition. Consideration should be given to expanding this district to include the areas heading North along Main Street, from the library to Canal Street, as well as south along Housatonic Street (see Figure 2).

2. Establish separate districts, such as the recently adopted Downtown Commercial Zone within the greater historic district (see Figure 3).

This gives the town control over the specific uses. Design guidelines should be established for these districts.

Figure 2

Existing and Proposed Historic District

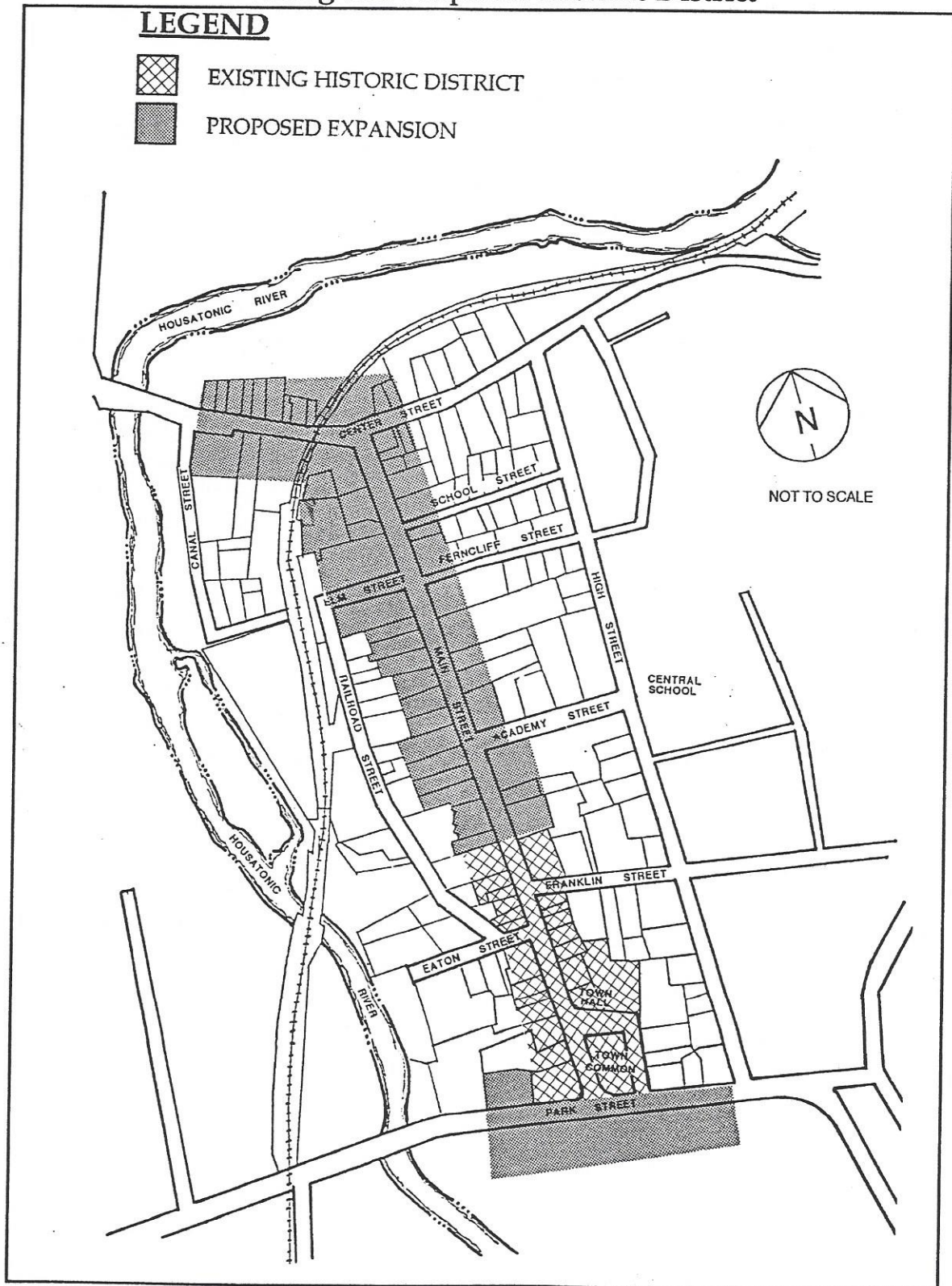
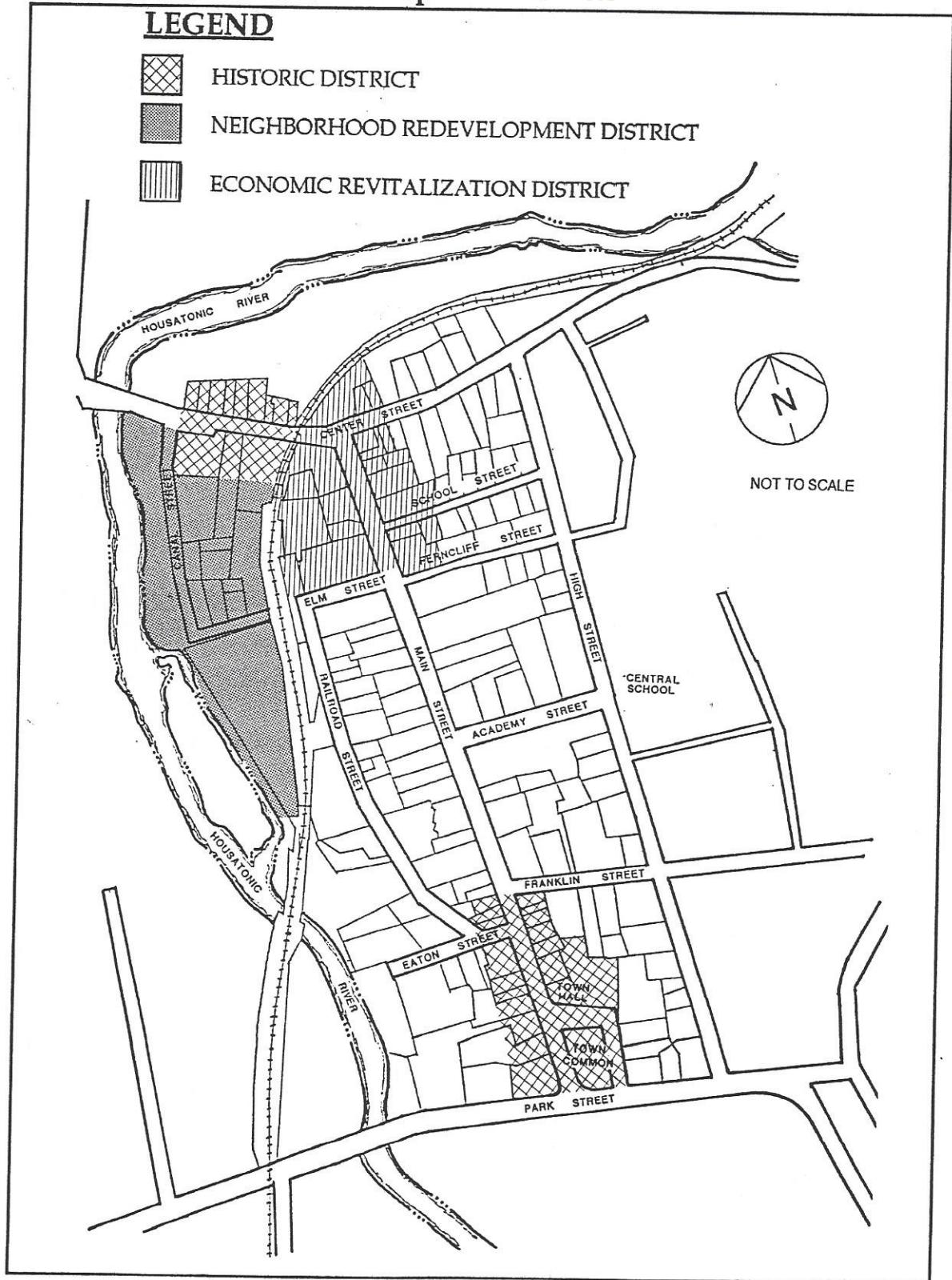


Figure 3
Proposed Districts



3. Investigate methods to emphasize the historic elements in the Downtown. There are several historic enhancement programs that could be undertaken by the Town or local organizations: Historical Plaque Program (presently underway), Local Landmark Program, Historic Street Names List, Historical and Cultural Educational Programs and an Historic and Architectural Review Board (Brattleboro Planning Services Department, 1992).
4. The Town should encourage creative and effective adaptive reuse of Downtown historic buildings. Upper floors should be used for residential purposes, while first floors should be devoted to commercial uses. For example, in the case of the Bookless Block, the Downtown's recent designation as an Economic Target Area (ETA) can provide incentives to foster its rehabilitation.
5. A demolition delay ordinance could be used by the Town to maintain its present stock of buildings. This ordinance requires a waiting period prior to the granting of a demolition permit for any historic structure (Preservation Planning Associates, 1990, 39).
6. Building codes for historic districts should not be so stringent as to inhibit development or rehabilitation opportunities.

5.3.2. Establish a comprehensive set of physical and aesthetic guidelines.

1. Define and enact a set of design guidelines which will help control the physical appearance of the Downtown. By employing design professionals to cooperate with the Historic District Commission, a set of design guidelines could be established. These guidelines deal with issues such as exterior building improvements, new construction, public and private signs, historic signs and public improvements (see Appendix C). The Design Review Board could assume the responsibility of implementing these guidelines (see Chapter IX). Amherst, Coventry and Brattleboro have such guidelines which could be used as models for Lee.

2. L.E.A.D.'s Facade Improvement Program should be extended to include as many buildings as possible throughout the Downtown.

3. Signage guidelines need to be readdressed. Public signs should be consolidated where possible in an effort to reduce visual clutter. All signs should reflect and complement the Downtown's image (Paumier, 1988). The signage ordinance should be relaxed to allow banners and flags along Main Street, providing the designs do not offend aesthetic sensibilities. This will contribute to the vitality of the Downtown.

4. Zoning, building, health and safety codes should be strictly enforced.

5.3.3. Funding Sources.

1. In the Downtown Ready Resource Fund/Economic Development Program, administered by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, a loan/grant fund is available to aid owners in rehabilitating their properties. This fund could be supplemented by an expanded loan-pool created by local banks and financial institutions (Preservation Planning Associates, 1990). (Individual banks have established funds for loans to Downtown Lee).
2. CDBG dollars are available from HUD for rehabilitation assistance to owners of single family homes and rental housing. A combination loan/grant package is prepared of up to \$12,000 per unit of housing with interest rates between 0-9% (Preservation Planning Associates, 1990, 38).
3. The Massachusetts Small Cities Program provides funding for housing rehabilitation, infrastructure improvements, downtown partnerships and economic development (Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, 1995).
4. Publicize the fact that Federal income tax credits are available for owners who rehabilitate their buildings according to federal preservation standards.
5. Publish a handout for property owners summarizing the various benefits and restrictions associated with Historic District status.

5.4. Goal Two

**Maintain civic, cultural and community-oriented uses and activities in the
Downtown.**

5.5. Objectives

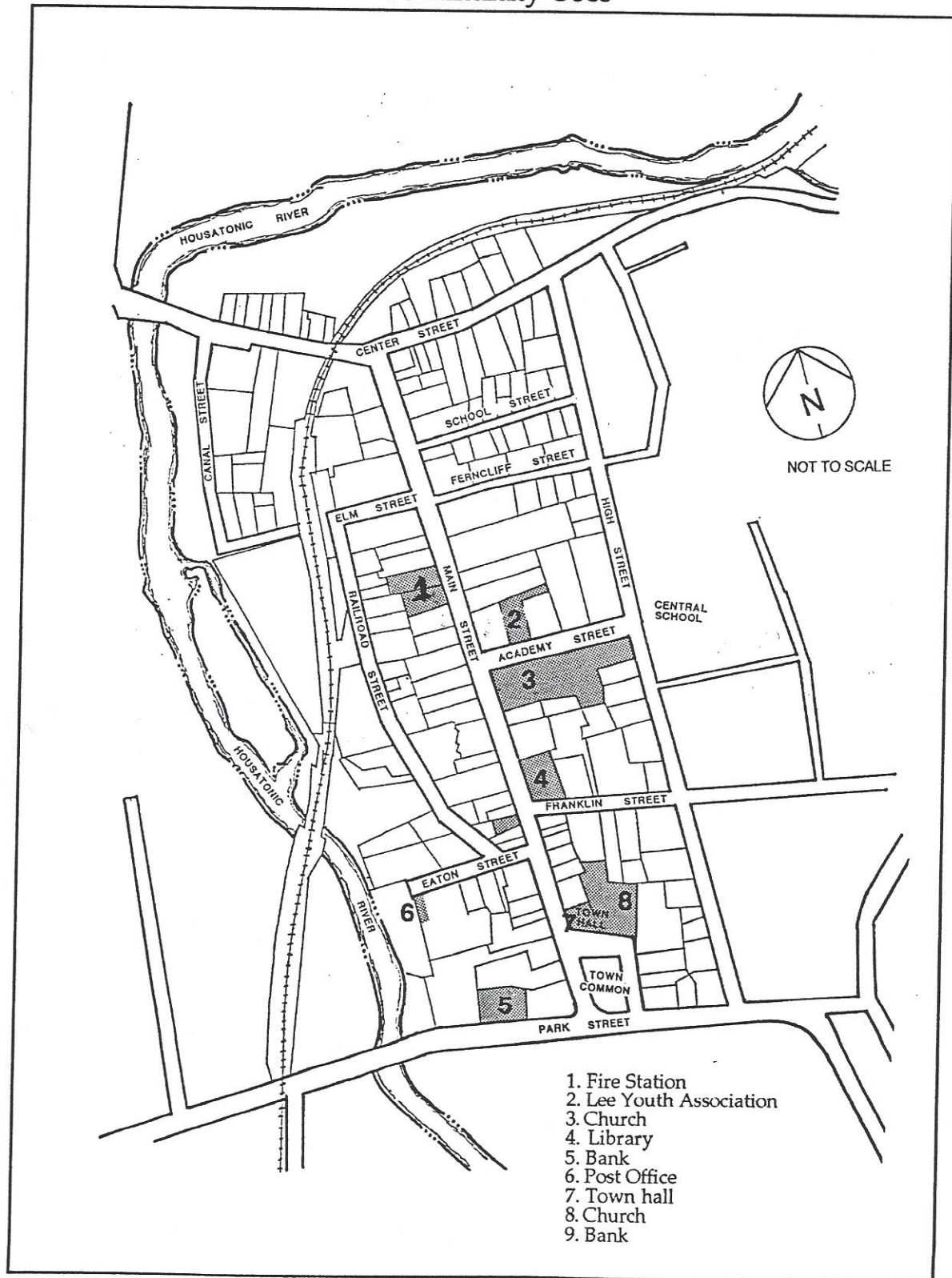
The following objectives should be used to achieve the goal of maintaining diverse uses within the Downtown.

1. **Maintain and encourage the present mixed-use character of the Downtown.**
2. **Encourage community activities in the Downtown.**

5.5.1. The present municipal and community uses of the Downtown must be maintained and encouraged.

1. The Town should encourage residential use in upper floors of Downtown buildings where feasible. This can be accomplished by offering tax incentives to property owners or by relaxing minimum parking requirements in cases of building reuse.
2. The Town must prevent the suburbanization of its community uses, such as the library or the Post-Office (see Figure 4). Relocating these uses from the Downtown would be detrimental to community character.

Figure 4
Community Uses



5.5.2. Encourage Community activities in the Downtown.

1. Sidewalk sales, outdoor picnicking, farmers markets, art and craft shows, outdoor movies, music, and seasonal festivals should be promoted by L.E.A.D. and the Chamber of Commerce in the Downtown district.
2. A community center offering cultural and recreational facilities for all age groups, conveniently located in a central area, would be an asset in the Downtown.

5.6. Goal Three

Enhance and beautify the Downtown's natural and open space resources.

5.7. Objective

The following objectives should be used to achieve the goal of enhancing and beautifying the Downtown's natural and open space resources:

1. Ensure all open space realizes its full potential for public benefit and use.
2. Identify funding sources.

5.7.1. Ensure all open space realizes its full potential for public benefit and use.

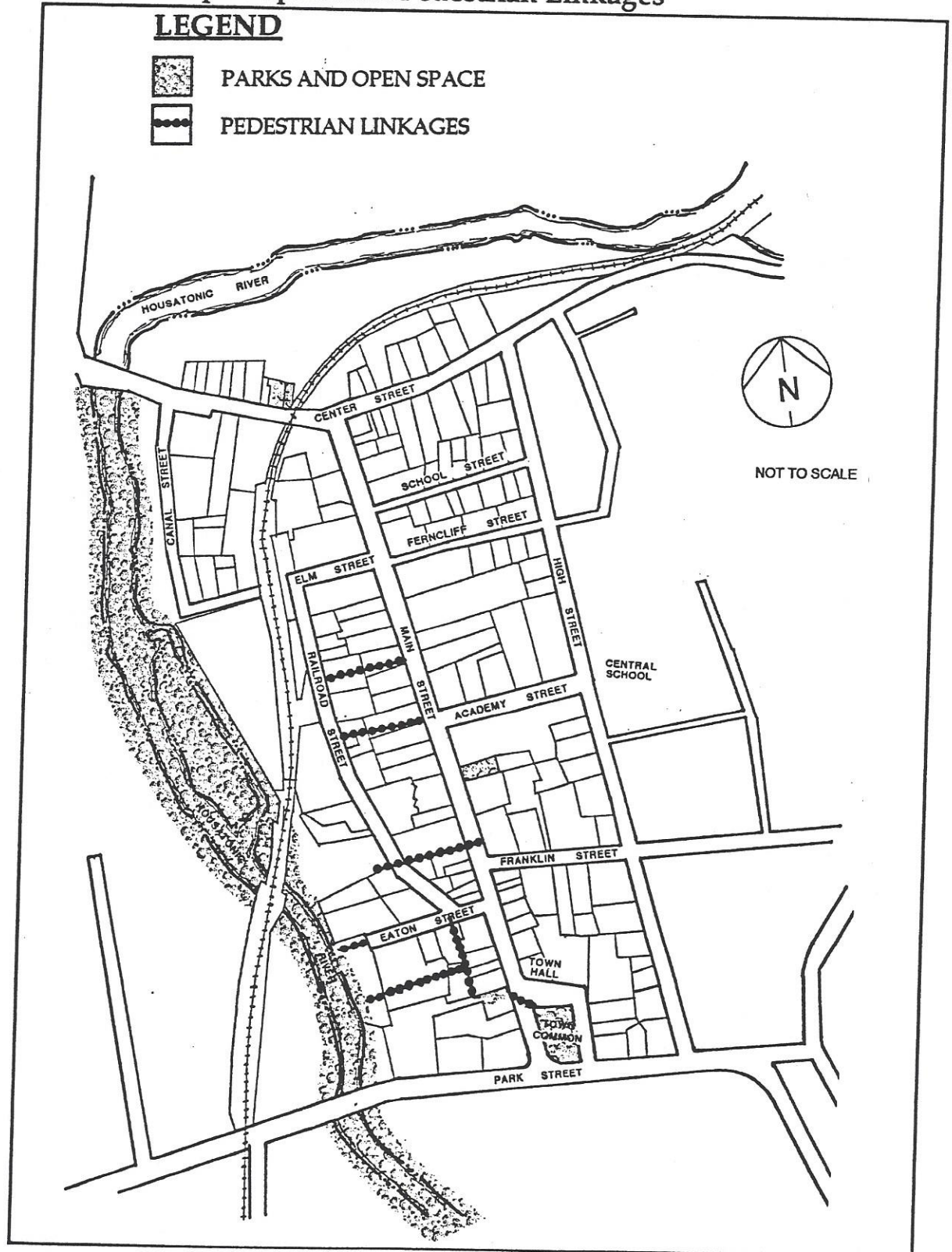
1. The Town must develop a joint partnership with the First Congregational Church to upgrade and manage the physical nature of the Common.
2. The Town must develop a prioritized action plan for acquiring land presently in private ownership in the Downtown. This is especially critical with regard to meeting unanticipated future parking, recreational and municipal needs.
3. Develop a greenway along the Housatonic river. The Town should establish a buffer zone on both sides of the river which would preserve open space and provide recreational opportunities (see Figure 5).
4. Establish pedestrian linkages which will link the Downtown to the river (see Figure 5).
5. The DPW shed, a non-conforming riverside use, could be relocated to a more suitable out-of-town location such as the land adjacent to the sewage treatment plant on Route 102.

5.7.2. Funding

1. The Town should explore the possibility of receiving grants from State sources which contribute funding towards land acquisition for creating open space, habitat protection and recreational systems (see Appendix B).
2. Encourage the donation of land parcels and conservation easements to the Town or to non-profit organizations such as Lee Land Trust.

Figure 5

Open Space and Pedestrian Linkages



3. Another option is to promote the use of transferable development rights (T.D.R.) which will allow the Town to protect valuable Downtown land from development pressures. Developers will be offered the right to develop on a designated receiving parcel of land in exchange for selling their development rights to the Town (Nelessen, 1993).

5.8. Goal Four

Encourage citizen participation and awareness.
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5.9. Objectives

The following objective should be used to achieve the goal of encouraging citizen participation:

5.9.1 Encourage the participation of the public in preserving community character.

1. Ensure citizens are represented on Downtown boards and committees.
2. All citizens should be educated about Town programs and projects by means of a newsletter overseen by L.E.A.D.

3. Volunteers composed of school children, religious and civic groups should be actively involved in beautification and improvement programs for the Downtown.

4. Include Lee's history in the public schools' curriculum.

VI. THE RIVER, OPEN SPACE, PARKING AND LINKAGES

6.1. Introduction

The Housatonic River is one of Downtown Lee's greatest assets as well as an under-exploited resource. The river has both recreational and open space potential. The river corridor is a unique open space adjacent to the Downtown. Also, scattered throughout Downtown are alleys and vistas which can be used to form the basis of a pedestrian and open space network.

It appears that public parking is adequate for the present needs of the Downtown. However, the existing parking requires improved management and organization. Thought should be given to future demands and steps taken to ensure that those demands can be accommodated.

The primary goal in this section is to develop a pedestrian and open space linkage system for the Downtown. This section introduces three goals which provide a basis for establishing this system:

- 1. Emphasize and increase the role of the Housatonic River within the Downtown.**
- 2. Establish a system of pedestrian and visual linkages.**
- 3. Maximize the efficiency of the existing parking and develop a plan for meeting future needs.**

6.2. Goal One

**Emphasize and increase the role of the Housatonic River within the
Downtown.**

6.3. Objective

The following objective should be used to achieve the goal of emphasizing and increasing the role of the River within the Downtown:

6.3.1. Protect and enhance the river and its environs, scenic vistas and open spaces.

1. Natural resource protection measures include: implementing a flood hazard area regulation; a watershed protection overlay district; Planned Unit Development/Planned Residential Development (PUD/PRD) requirement; and a wetlands bylaw (Robbins, 1988). (For more information on PUD/PRD see Appendix 5).
2. Establish a buffer (75-150 feet wide) as an additional tool to preserve open space along the river.
3. Much of the land adjacent to the river is in private ownership. The Conservation Commission, or Lee Land Trust should explore various options for land acquisition in this area.

6.4. Goal Two

Establish a system of pedestrian and visual linkages.

6.5. Objectives

The following objectives should be used to achieve the goal of utilizing the existing resources in the Downtown in order to establish a system of pedestrian and visual linkages:

1. Landscape and upgrade the elements of the proposed linkage system.
2. Optimize the present uses of open space.
3. Educate the public on natural resource issues related to the Downtown.
4. Encourage public and private initiatives.

6.5.1. Landscape and upgrade elements of the proposed linkage system.

1. The many alleys scattered throughout the Downtown represent an underutilized asset and should be incorporated into the overall pedestrian system. Their aesthetics should be improved to invite use and promote a sense of security. Brick or cobble paving could be used to guide the pedestrian along these connectors. Small retail businesses should be encouraged to locate at the ends of connectors to provide a destination for pedestrians. Existing retail businesses should explore the possibilities of having rear entrances which would provide access to off-street parking areas.

2. Maintain and enhance scenic vistas by emphasizing their presence. This can be achieved by suitable landscaping and appropriate lighting and street furniture.

6.5.2. Optimize the present uses of open spaces.

1. A riverside park plan previously developed for the Lee Conservation Commission should be considered for implementation. This plan proposed constructing a park suitable for passive recreation adjacent to the Post Office (see Figure 5). State open space funding sources, matched with Downtown Partnership grants, should be explored as a funding vehicle for this and other projects.

2. The 1983 Greenway Plan developed by the Housatonic River Watershed Association should also be considered and implemented. The Town owns land on the west bank of the river. The east side is in private ownership. Establishing a greenway along the river will preserve this corridor from future development (see Figure 5).

3. The river-island located behind the lumber yard (see Figure 5) is another potential resource in the open space plan. The island should remain in its natural state as a habitat for indigenous flora and fauna. However, the construction of a small bridge and selective pruning is recommended to improve access.

4. Developing a canoe launch along the river's edge could be implemented at low or no cost; this would expand Downtown

recreational opportunities. The Chairperson of Massachusetts Fisheries and Wildlife, George Darey, a resident of Lenox, is eager to bring canoe access to Lee. In 1993 Great Barrington accomplished this using Downtown Partnership funds.

5. The role of the Town Common should not be underestimated. It is an essential element of the community's character, functioning as a gateway to Main Street. Improved landscaping and seating will promote the Common as a place to gather and relax.

6. Outdoor cafes should be encouraged. They serve to promote a sense of liveliness and personality throughout the Downtown. This has proven to be very effective in Northampton.

6.5.3. Educate the public concerning activities and efforts relating to natural resources in the Downtown.

1. Print a description and map, to be made available to the public, of all local recreational and conservation lands.

2. Design beautification projects for the Downtown in order to involve and educate school-age children. This would serve to build a sense of pride among the younger residents.

6.5.4. Encourage public/private initiatives in the Downtown.

1. Encourage volunteerism among the citizens of Lee. Local industries should also be encouraged to participate in Downtown enhancement programs.

2. Incorporate the river into the identity of the Downtown.

The responsibilities of the Conservation Commission should include overseeing environmental issues and programs within the Downtown.

3. The First Congregational Church and L.E.A.D. should work together to develop improvement plans and a management strategy for the Common.

6.6. Goal Three

Maximize the efficiency of the existing parking and develop a plan to meet future needs.

6.7. Objectives

The following objectives should be used to achieve the goal of maximizing the efficiency of the parking system:

- 1. Redesign and reorganize the Railroad Street municipal lot.**
- 2. Incorporate parking into the overall linkage system.**

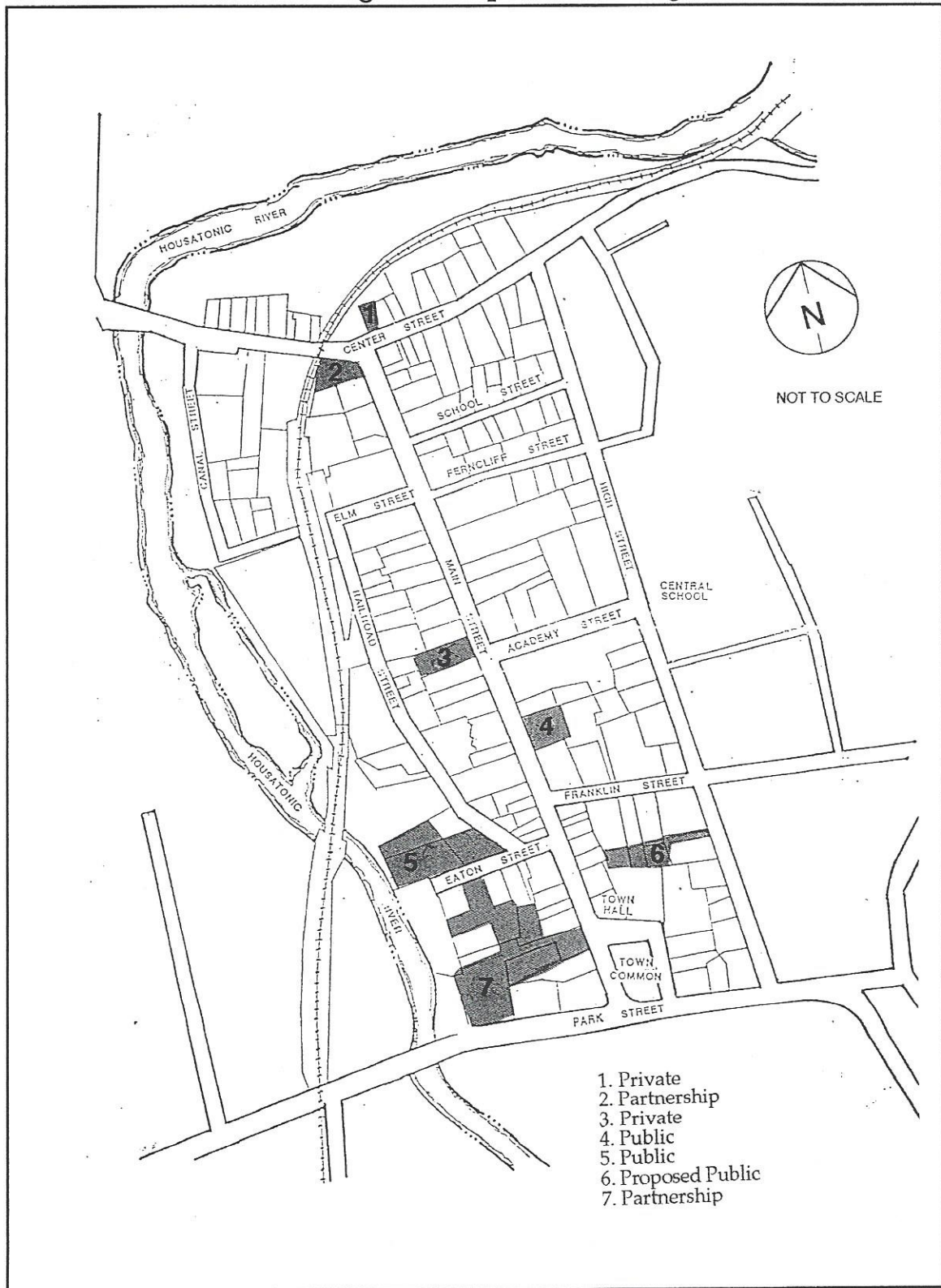
6.7.1. Redesign and reorganize the parking area in the vicinity of Railroad Street.

1. Establish a parking commission to work in cooperation with the Traffic Commissioner. This organization should coordinate their efforts with L.E.A.D. to ensure compatibility with overall goals for the Downtown.
2. Develop a set of design guidelines which will govern the redesign effort. These should strive to minimize the visual impact of the surface parking lot behind the west side of Main Street, the "sea of asphalt" (see Figure 6), while fitting the greatest number of spaces into the smallest possible area.
3. Any parking lots exposed to Main Street should be screened by use of landscaping or other means in order to minimize their negative visual impact on the streetscape.

6.7.2. Incorporate parking into the overall linkage system.

1. The "sea of asphalt" should be incorporated into the overall linkage system of the Downtown. This parking lot should serve to facilitate pedestrian movement between the various uses in the Downtown. There is an immediate need to redesign this lot for more efficient parking. The alleys can serve as connectors between the Downtown and parking areas such as this lot.

Figure 6
Existing and Proposed Parking



2. In terms of future parking demands the best option may be to develop the area behind the Bookless Building on Main Street. It is estimated that this lot will provide approximately forty-two spaces. In conjunction with this the present pedestrian walkway which links this area with Main Street should be enhanced. Community Development Block Grant funds are available to fund these improvements.

VII. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

7.1. Introduction

The economy of the Downtown is supported by a variety of mixed uses. This diversity enhances the community character of the Downtown. Many businesses are locally owned and have developed a distinct market niche and customer base. The economic climate is enhanced by virtue of the mix of businesses complementing one another, rather than directly competing.

Most of the existing businesses within the Downtown function to serve the needs of the local community and region. The Downtown has vital uses such as a drugstore, a hardware store, a five and dime store, a supermarket, restaurants, and bars. This diversity of uses is a valuable asset in maintaining, establishing and developing an economically healthy Downtown. It is this diversity which needs to be preserved, protected and enhanced in order to promote the community's character. It is likely that there will be casualties resulting from future economic restructuring of the Downtown and the region. Economic development priorities should be directed towards continuing to serve the needs of the residents of Lee.

This section introduces three goals for fostering the economic development of the Downtown. They are each accompanied by a series of objectives specifying the means to achieve them. These goals are:

- 1. Preserve and maintain existing businesses in the Downtown.**
- 2. Encourage new business opportunities in the Downtown.**
- 3. Maintain and promote a variety of mixed-use development opportunities that will support and enhance the Downtown.**

7.2. Goal One

Preserve and maintain existing businesses in the downtown.

7.3. Objectives

The following goals should be used to achieve the goal of preserving and maintaining existing businesses in the Downtown:

1. **Encourage business retention.**
2. **Establish a merchants association.**

7.3.1. Encourage business retention.

1. Develop a business retention and business assistance program.

Work with local economic development organizations such as Community Development Corporations and the Small Business Development Center at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst to establish assistance programs such as Working Capital and Technical Assistance.

2. Work with local financial institutions to create opportunities for access to capital such as loan pools, and small business loans. (This is presently being implemented using CDBG funding).

3. Non-profit municipal agencies such as L.E.A.D. and the Chamber of Commerce should share resources and work cooperatively to develop a strong relationship with business and property owners (Palma, 1995).

4. Establish a Community Development Corporation (C.D.C.) in conjunction with L.E.A.D. Additional funding from Community Development Block Grants is available for economic development when that funding is channeled through a C.D.C. (Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, 1993)

7.3.2. Establish a Merchants Association.

1. The Chamber of Commerce and L.E.A.D. should encourage local business owners and merchants to have a distinct presence within the Chamber of Commerce. This organization could provide a forum for business owners to voice individual concerns. Other functions might include group promotions and advertising, sponsoring special events such as sidewalk sales and Lee Days.

2. Identify concerns of local business owners. The Chamber of Commerce should function to support, and assist businesses with needs such as capital, marketing, or technical advice and training.

7.4. Goal Two

Encourage new business opportunities in the Downtown which will contribute to and enhance the quality of life, while preserving the existing social and physical environment.

5. Objective

The following objective should be used to achieve the goal of developing business opportunities in the Downtown:

7.5.1. Undertake an economic development and market analysis for the Downtown.

1. This analysis will serve several purposes. It will define the Downtown's present economic niches and will identify prospective niches to be targeted. It will also analyze the Downtown's economic role in relation to the proposed Outlet Village or to any other new or potential commercial developments. Finally, this economic market analysis should determine the Downtown's retail, office, and housing potentials and identify an optimum mix of new businesses.

2. Identify and target vacant and under-utilized buildings for new business development. Work with the owners of those properties to encourage rehabilitation and/or improvements to attract new businesses or expand existing uses.

3. Encourage new businesses that will have local ownership or economic ties to the region. Locally-owned businesses serve to keep money within the local economy. In addition, a local business owner is apt to be more concerned with the economic health and vitality of the Downtown than is an absentee owner.
4. Encourage new businesses that will complement existing ones and that will bolster Downtown Lee's economic niche within the region.
5. Using the Economic Market Analysis as a guide, target new businesses which will enhance the balance of mixed uses, the overall economic health of Downtown Lee and continue to fulfill the needs of the local community and the Southern Berkshires.

7.6. Goal Three

Maintain and promote a variety of new residential and commercial development opportunities that will support and enhance the Downtown.

7.7. Objectives

The following objectives should be used to achieve the goal of maintaining and promoting mixed-use development to enhance the character of the Downtown:

- 1. Use existing commercial and residential properties to enhance the Downtown.**
- 2. Encourage new construction to meet additional Downtown needs.**

3. Ensure that new development conforms to the existing character of the Downtown.
4. Adopt necessary tools and techniques to achieve stated goals.

7.7.1. Use existing commercial and residential properties to enhance and preserve the Downtown

1. Encourage the revitalization and rehabilitation of existing commercial and residential properties. The Massachusetts Small Cities Program (M.S.C.P.) operates a Community Development Fund and Economic Development Set-Aside (E.D.S.A.) grants. These funds can be used for economic development and commercial improvements (Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, 1993).
2. Provide property and business owners with available incentives such as state and federal grant programs. Grants such as the Urban Development Action Grant (UDAG), the Community Development Action Grant (CDAG), and Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), should all be used to initiate reinvestment within the Downtown (Brattleboro Planning Services Department, 1992).
3. Permit accessory apartments if they meet architectural and site plan standards. Accessory apartments are an effective way to meet a number of housing needs in Downtown Lee. They provide affordable housing choices for the elderly, young people, and single parent families.
4. Allow the conversion from single family to multifamily dwellings.

7.7.2. Encourage new commercial and residential construction to meet additional needs that are not met through existing structures.

1. Establish a Redevelopment District in selected areas. For example, the north end of the Downtown has sections where such redevelopment initiatives could be implemented (see Figure 3). The combination of businesses with residential activities is consistent with the Downtown's traditional pattern of a tightly knit mix of uses which support each other.

2. Establish a Planned Residential District (see Figure 3). The area around Main Street has traditionally offered a range of housing opportunities. The vitality of the Downtown is closely connected to the surrounding neighborhoods because nearby residents are typically Downtown customers and employees. This PRD should be consistent with Lee's diverse population needs and resources. Therefore, it should include a diversity of housing types such as owner occupied, rental, and cooperative.

3. Permit and encourage innovation in new construction that respects the existing character of the Downtown. In selected areas permit flexible residential plans and arrangements to allow for clusters, townhouses or combinations of housing.

7.7.3. Ensure that new development conforms to the existing character of the Downtown.

1. Establish new development guidelines. Restrictions on height and setbacks should be compatible with existing structures so that future development or redevelopment remains consistent with established patterns in the Downtown (see Chapter IX).

2. Adopt clear criteria for granting variances for infill construction. Adopting these criteria will give advance notice to property owners as to the standards and requirements mandated. Infill construction should be consistent with the character of the existing neighborhood. The requirement for additional on-site parking should be determined on a case by case basis.

7.7.4. Adopt necessary tools and techniques to achieve desired goals and objectives.

1. Establish new zoning districts within the Downtown (see Figure 3). These new districts should be designed to work with and promote the existing strengths. Zoning changes such as overlay districts and incentive zoning can be used to encourage investment and reinvestment in specific areas. These changes will help to guide future development which will be architecturally and economically compatible in Downtown and adjacent neighborhoods.

2. Adopt a series of clear and precise design guidelines that will ensure any new construction is consistent with the existing fabric (see Chapter VI).

VIII. DISTRICT PLANS

8.1 Introduction

To ensure that the community character is adequately preserved and promoted it is helpful to divide the Downtown into separate districts. For this section, the Downtown has been divided into ten separate districts (see Figure 7). Each district represents an area which warrants individual recommendations. Therefore, a series of recommendations accompany each district within this section. These recommendations have been compiled into a matrix, located at the end of this chapter.

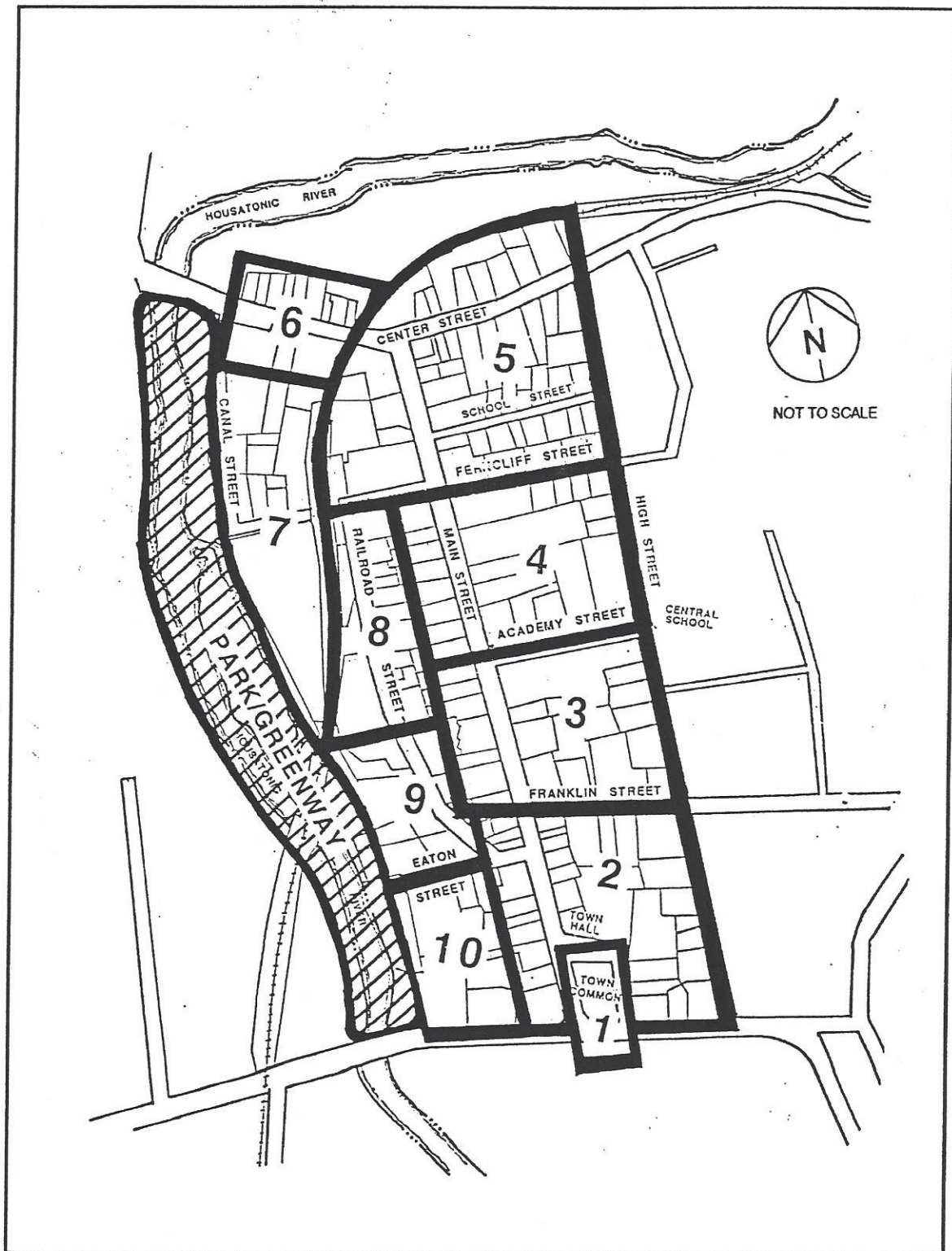
8.2. District One

This district encompasses the Town Common and the southern gateway to the Downtown. By enhancing this area, a sense of place can be established to set the stage for the rest of the Downtown. The following are a series of recommendations for District One:

- 8.2.1.** Develop a "Gateway" plan that welcomes visitors to the Downtown (see Figure 8). The "Gateway" serves several purposes. It will establish a strong and aesthetically pleasant entrance into the Downtown which will further strengthen the presence and character of the common. Various steps are required to achieve this goal: first, clean up the present sign "mess" and create an attractive sign welcoming visitors into Downtown Lee. This should be situated in a highly visible location. Also, marble sculpture could be located here so as to draw attention to the gateway and to Lee's heritage.

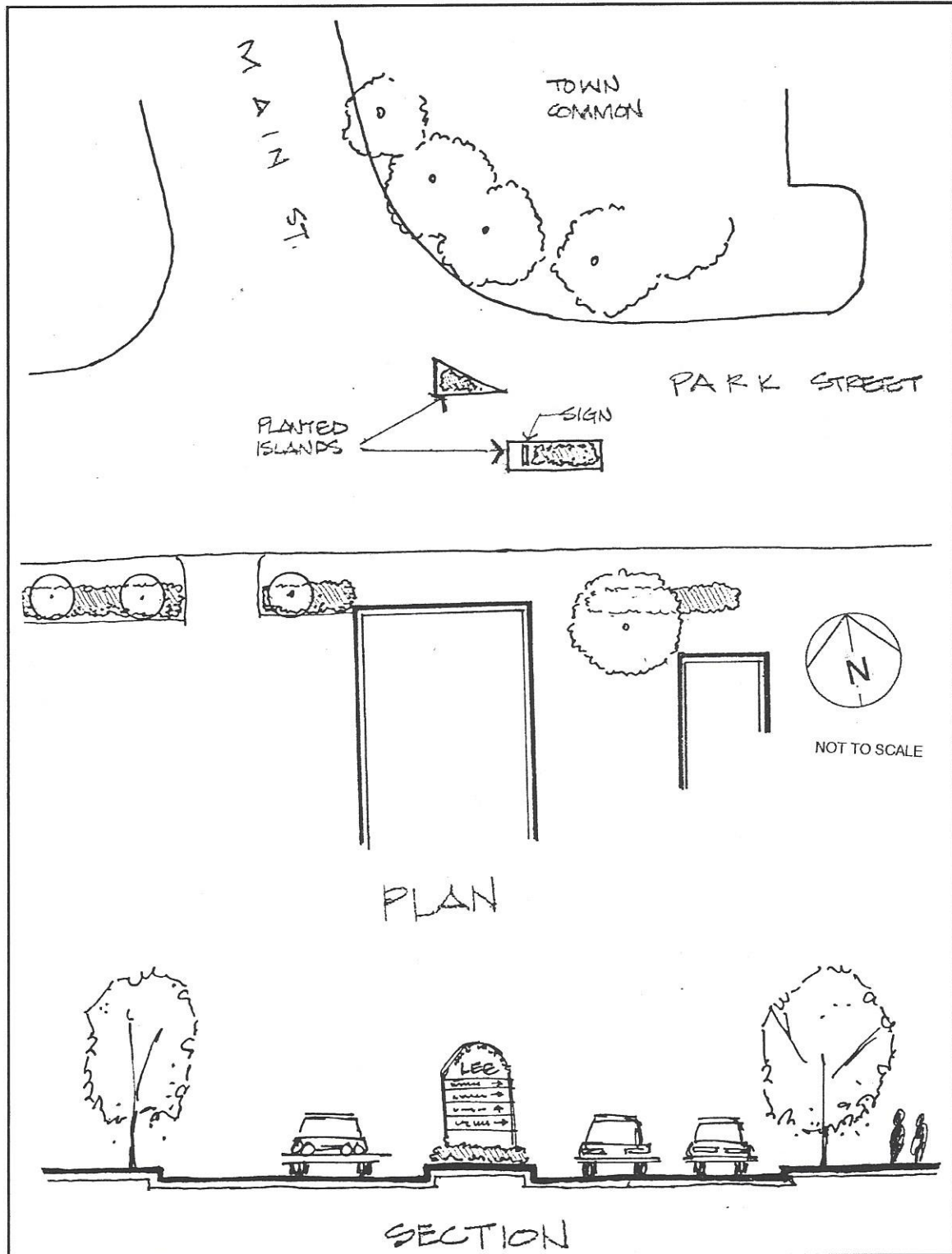
Figure 7

Recommendation Districts



- 8.2.2. A comprehensive landscape plan is another component to the "Gateway". This landscape plan should develop a sense of uniformity and connection between the intersection of Main Street and Park Street. The addition of street trees and landscaped sidewalks will create a visual connection between open space and pedestrian/traffic corridors.
- 8.2.3. Examine the possibility of placing traffic islands at the intersection of Main Street and Park Street (see Figure 8). This will help guide and control traffic flow while providing additional opportunities to incorporate landscaping.
- 8.2.4. A "Downtown Common Enhancement Program" should be organized to work in conjunction with the "Gateway" program. The Common will be the central element of the gateway into the Downtown. Improvements should be undertaken to enhance the aesthetic and functional qualities of the Common. Elements such as benches, sculpture and planting beds would significantly improve this underutilized resource. The Town must solidify its relationship with the First Congregational Church to ensure the implementation and success of the "Gateway" and associated landscape improvements.

Figure 8
Gateway Plan



8.3. District Two

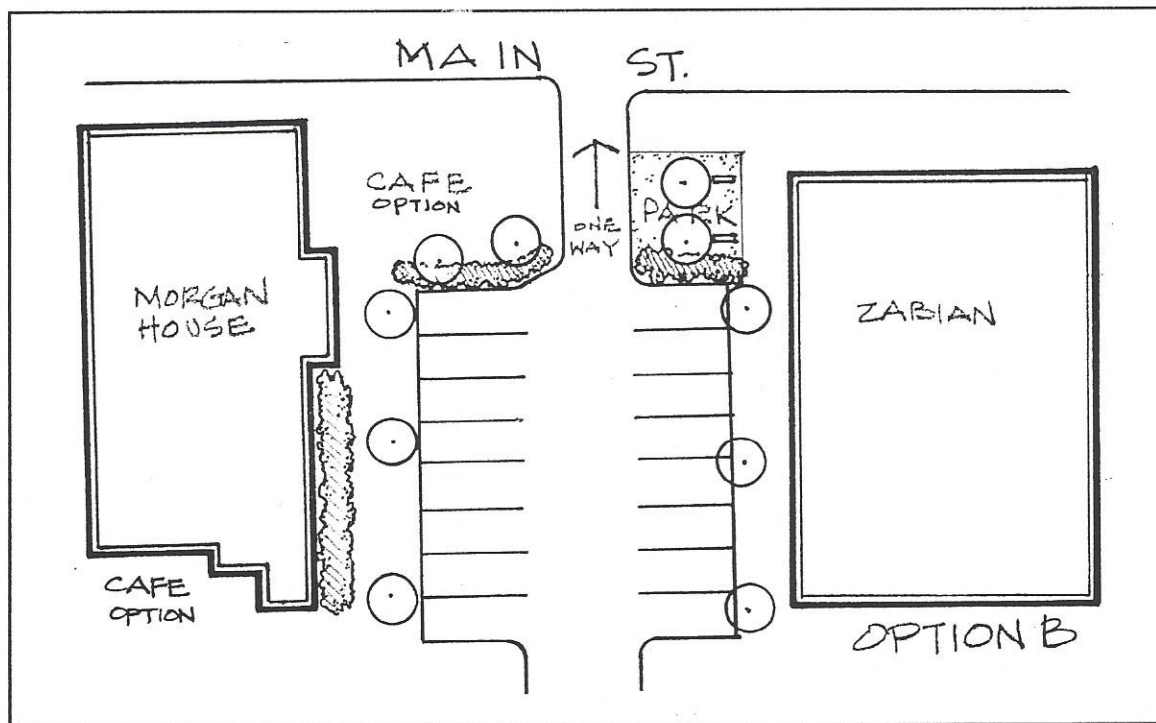
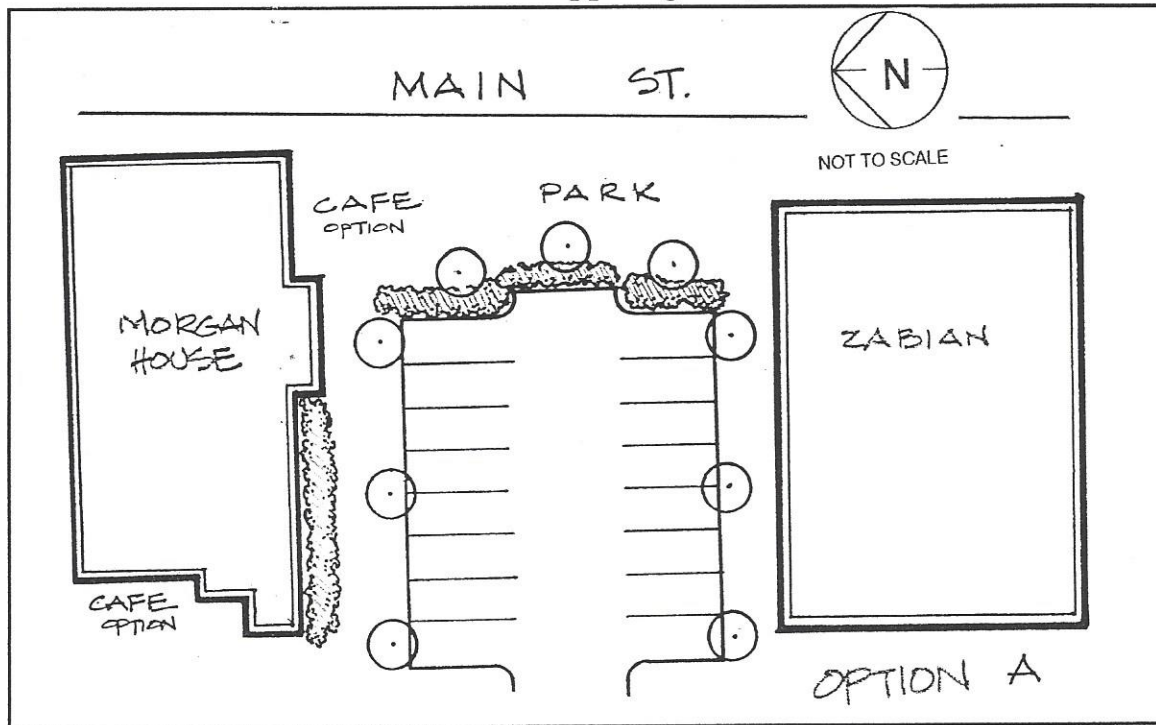
The Town Hall is the prominent architectural element in this district. The entire area is on the National Register for Historic Districts so it is subject to special guidelines and restrictions. The following are a series of recommendations for District Two:

8.3.1. Examine the possible expansion of an outdoor seating area for the Morgan House (MacIntosh, 1981). (Plans for a public pocket-park, on the south-side of the building, are under consideration at the present time in conjunction with the Sidewalk Improvement Program). This location would serve two primary purposes: it would create a pleasant environment, spur adjacent landowners to make similar improvements to their properties and would establish a linkage to the Common.

8.3.2. Examine the possibility of reconfiguring the current point of egress-ingress from Main Street into the Price Chopper parking lot (see Figure 9). According to the 1992 Traffic and Parking Study completed by the Massachusetts Department of Highways, it was determined that turns off Main Street into the Price Chopper lot and Eaton Street increased traffic back ups and congestion. New design options are recommended for the Price Chopper entrance (it is important that these options do not affect the present parking capacity of the Price Chopper lot):

- a. Completely eliminate that point of ingress-egress, therefore making Park Street and Eaton Street the primary points of egress and

Figure 9
Price Chopper Egress



ingress. This option would allow significant design alternatives for the previously recommended pocket park.

b. Another option would be to restrict this access to one-way egress. This would still allow for a pocket park, with only minor design changes to the existing entrance and parking lot configuration. This would ensure that parking on the north side of the Zabien building would be preserved.

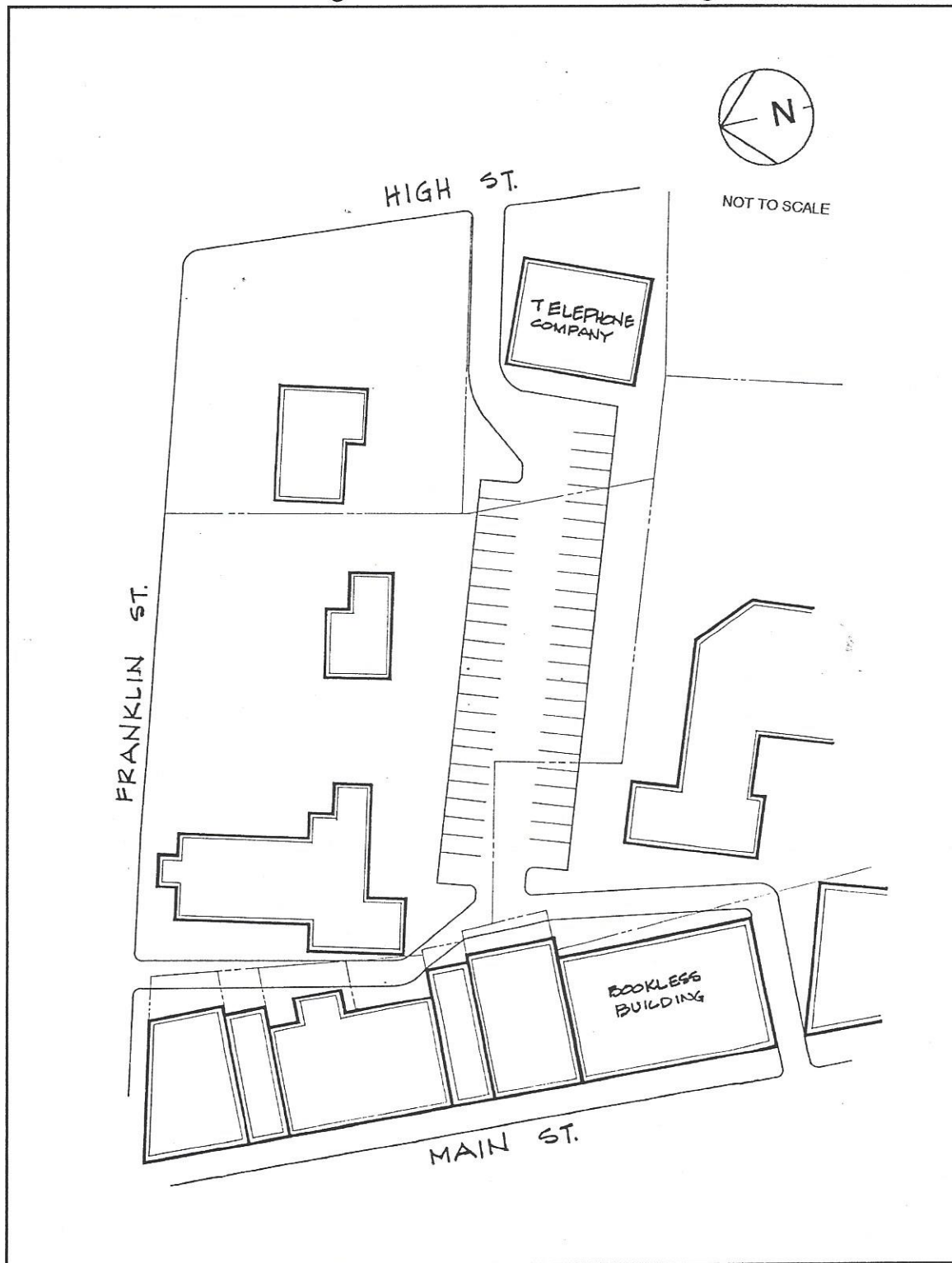
8.3.3. Target the upper stories of the Bookless Building for redevelopment.

The vacant second and third stories of this building are centrally located in the Downtown and have great potential. The Town needs to work closely with the current owner to assist and encourage revitalizing and rehabilitating this underutilized space. It is recommended that this space be converted to either residential or office purposes. However, the final recommendations should be based upon the findings of the soon to be completed Economic Market Analysis.

8.3.4. One of the reasons that the Bookless Building has not been occupied is the lack of available parking and the additional parking requirements that would be mandated to service a new use. The space located directly behind the Bookless Building represents a solution to this problem. Currently, this lot is a vacant space surrounded by backyards. It has been previously recommended in the "PositiveLee Study" that this space be developed into a municipal parking lot (see Figure 10). This parking lot could provide approximately forty new parking spaces

Figure 10

Parking Lot Behind Bookless Building



to the Downtown. In addition, a new parking lot might provide the necessary incentives to attract new investment into the underutilized Bookless Building.

8.4. District Three

This district is listed in the National Register for Historical Districts. It contains a diversity of municipal, community, religious and commercial uses. The library is an outstanding example of the use of local building materials in a landmark building. The following are a list of recommendations for District Three:

8.4.1. Create a park on Town-owned land adjacent to the public library. Plans have been approved to create a park here. It will provide the Downtown with much needed landscaping and open space. The park will be a significant element in the proposed Downtown Open Space and Linkage Plan. Marble could be integrated into this park in the form of curbing or retaining walls as a way of visually linking it with surrounding buildings.

8.4.2. Enhance the existing alleyway that runs from the public-library, across Main Street and past the Senior Center. This creates a pedestrian linkage between Main Street, Railroad Street, the "sea of asphalt" and the river. Additional landscaping and improved paving will encourage and accommodate pedestrian flow. The improvements to the alleyway can create the necessary incentives to attract new development and reinvestment at the terminus on Railroad Street. Other alleys which

are located along the west side of Main Street should be assessed for their linkage potential.

8.4.3. Identify and target buildings in this district for L.E.A.D.'s Facade Improvement Program.

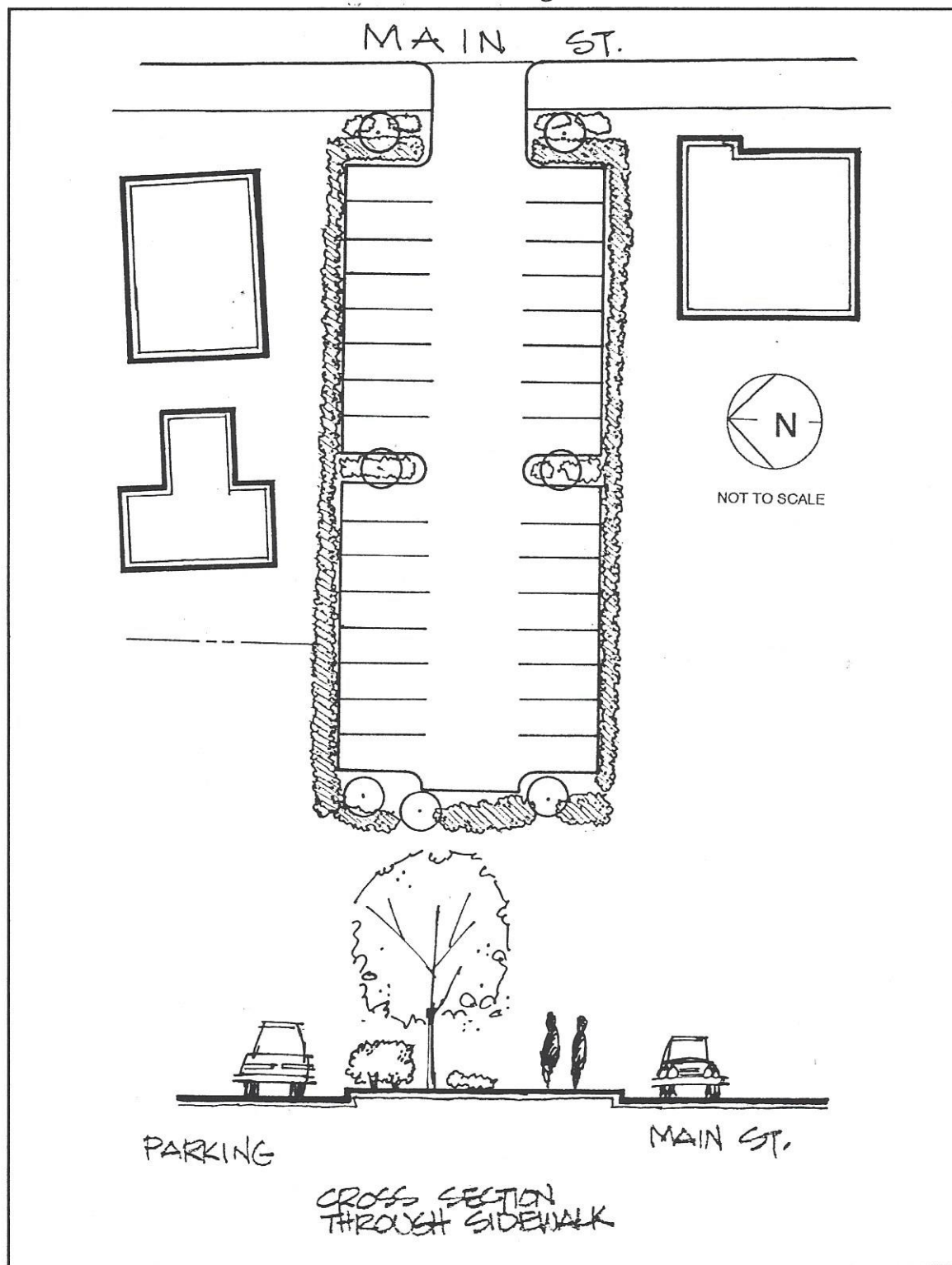
8.5. District Four

This district contains the Lee Youth Association (L.Y.A.), the Fire Station, the new ambulance facility, as well as residential and commercial uses. The following recommendations apply to District Four:

- 8.5.1.** Identify possible new occupants for the vacant "Bill's Restaurant" building. The highest and best use for this property would be its re-utilization as a restaurant, as it is already equipped with the necessary facilities and is situated in an optimum Downtown location on Main Street. Another option would be for the L.Y.A. to expand into this structure from their present location behind "Bill's".
- 8.5.2.** The presence of a parking lot on Main Street has a negative effect on the streetscape and should be avoided whenever possible. Encourage the Church to minimize the visual impact of its Main Street parking lot via landscaping or screening measures (see Figure 11).
- 8.5.3.** Identify and target buildings in this district for the Facade Restoration Program. Several property owners have applied for L.E.A.D.'s Facade Restoration Program.

Figure 11

Church Parking Lot



8.6. District Five

This is a mixed use district, home to the landmark "Joe's Diner". This area needs improvements in order to increase its connection to the rest of the Downtown. The following recommendations apply to District Five:

8.6.1. Target this district for commercial reinvestment and revitalization.

This area's economic base could be strengthened by designating it as an Economic Revitalization District.

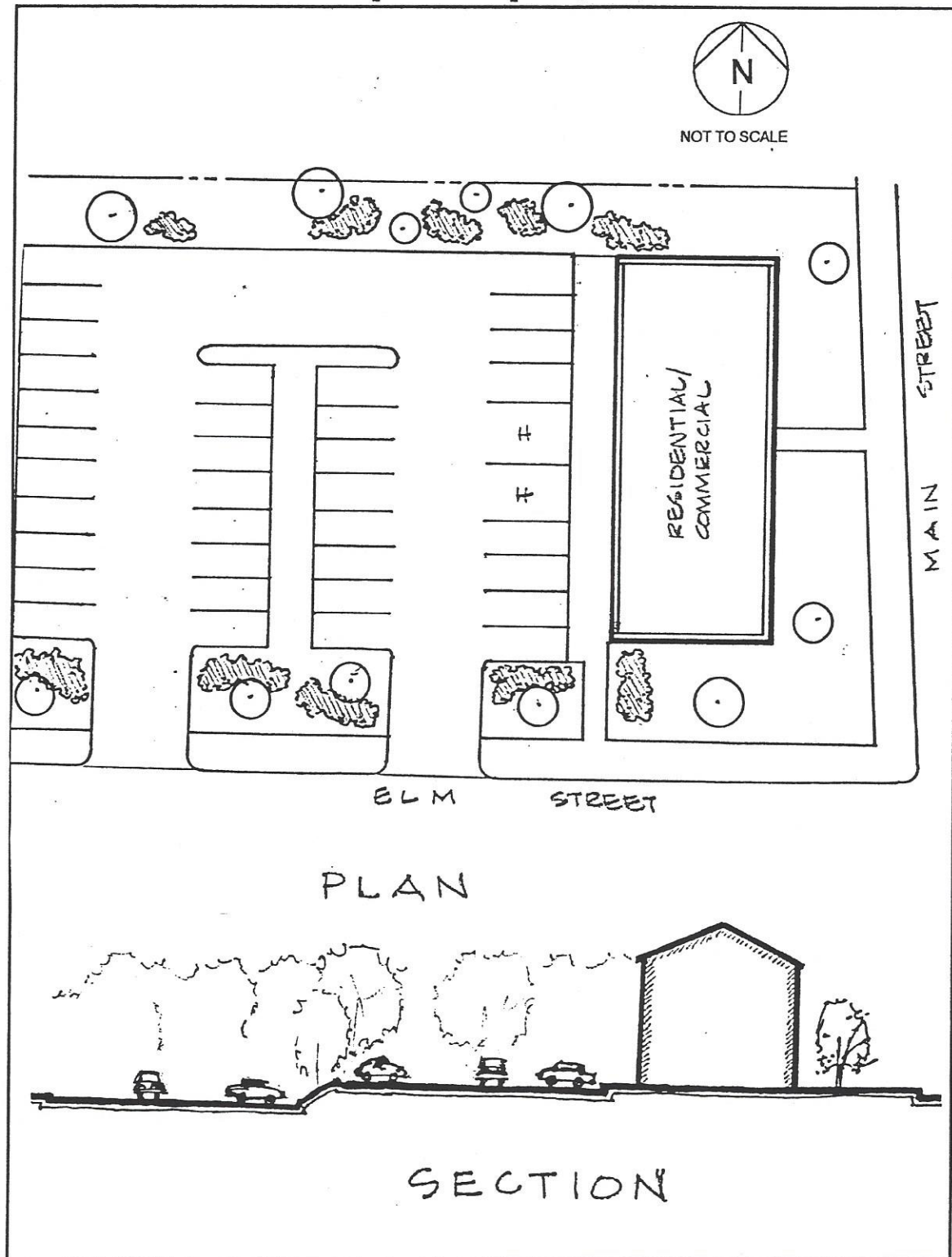
8.6.2. Examine development potentials for Lot #113 (Tax Assessor's Map #12A). This lot, on the corner of Main Street and Elm Street (see Figure 12) is vacant and has the potential for development. It is recommended that any future development on this site combine commercial and residential uses. Any construction here should be compatible with the existing character of this district. This site is quite large, and provides a great deal of development flexibility. Therefore, any development proposal should have an innovative site design concept, to maximize the potential of this anchor location.

8.6.3. Enhance the appearance of the district by incorporating landscaping.

Currently, this area is characterized by a barren intersection with little landscaping. It is recommended that a landscaped traffic islands be installed at the congested intersection here.

Figure 12

Concept Plan: Map 12A, Lot 113

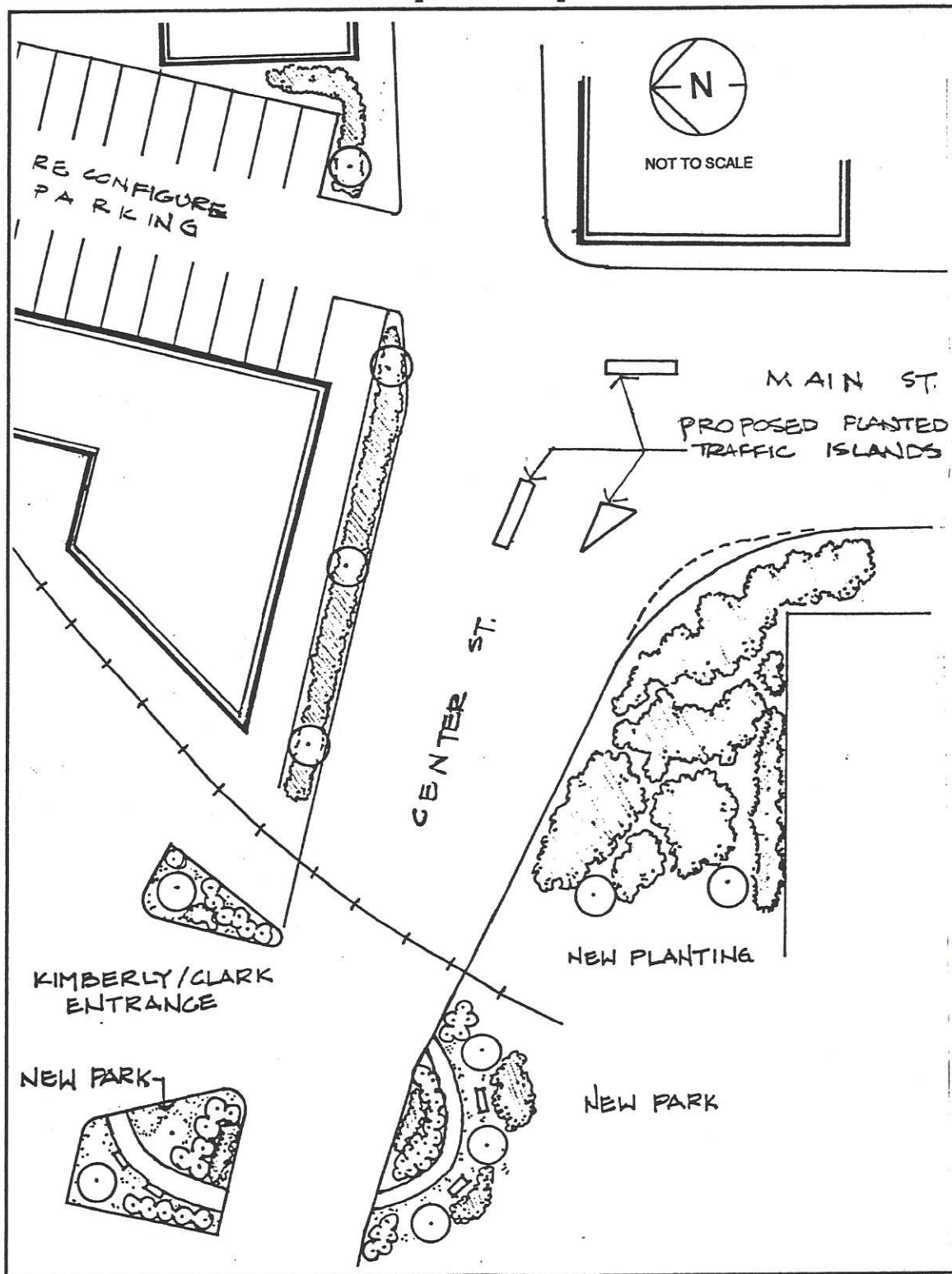


Planting low-growing shrubbery in front of Joe's Diner block (Lot #75, Tax Assessor's Map #12A) will serve to further improve this district (see Figure 13). Landscaping will enhance the appearance, soften the impact of the intersection, and create a sense of pedestrian separation from the traffic flow.

- 8.6.4. Improve and rehabilitate this intersection by repainting pedestrian crosswalks and establishing a turning lane. However, further design efforts may be needed here in the form of a traffic island and re-grading to improve sight lines. This would serve to regulate and control the flow of traffic and improve vehicular and pedestrian safety.
- 8.6.5. Identify and target properties in this district for the Facade Restoration Program. Some properties have been already been identified for L.E.A.D.'s Facade Restoration Program.
- 8.6.6. Examine the potential for increasing the available parking stock. New businesses and economic development will require additional parking. Revising the zoning regulations which mandate minimum parking requirements for building reuse is recommended as a means to spur development. Use of measures such as the transfer of parking rights or shared parking facilities should be encouraged.

The Town should attempt to establish private-public partnerships or negotiated deals with Kimberly-Clark and O'Connell Properties to

Figure 13
Concept Plan: Map 12A



provide additional parking. Another option would be for the Town to acquire a portion of Lot #109 (Tax Assessor's Map #12A), either through purchase or eminent domain, for the development of a municipal parking facility.

8.7. District Six

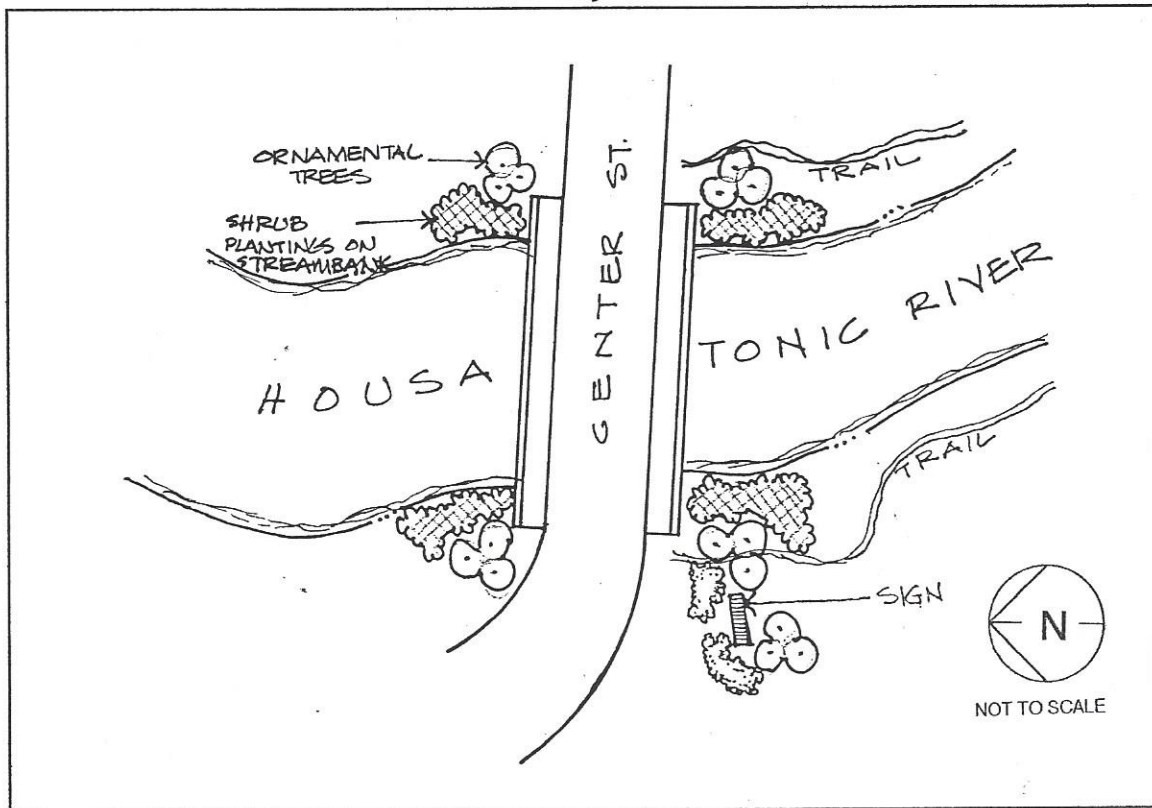
This contains some of the oldest buildings in the Downtown. The uses here are industrial, commercial and residential. The following recommendations apply to District Six:

- 8.7.1. Develop a "Gateway" plan that welcomes visitors into the downtown (see Figure 14). Establishing a "Gateway" will provide an aesthetically pleasant and attractive entrance into the downtown. It should follow the same design guidelines that were previously described in District One. It is recommended that this "Gateway" plan incorporate the existing bridge over the Housatonic River.
- 8.7.2. District six should be designated as a historic preservation district under the jurisdiction of the Historic District Commission. This would encourage the restoration and preservation of existing historic structures.

8.8. District Seven

This district is located along the west side of the river and bounded to the east by the railroad tracks. Commercial and residential uses dominate this area. The following recommendations apply to District Seven:

Figure 14
Gateway Plan



8.8.1. Encourage mixed used revitalization and reinvestment, with primary emphasis on residential development. This area should be designated as a Neighborhood Redevelopment District or a Neighborhood Business and Residential zone. Other recommended zoning options are Planned Unit Development (PUD) (see Appendix C).

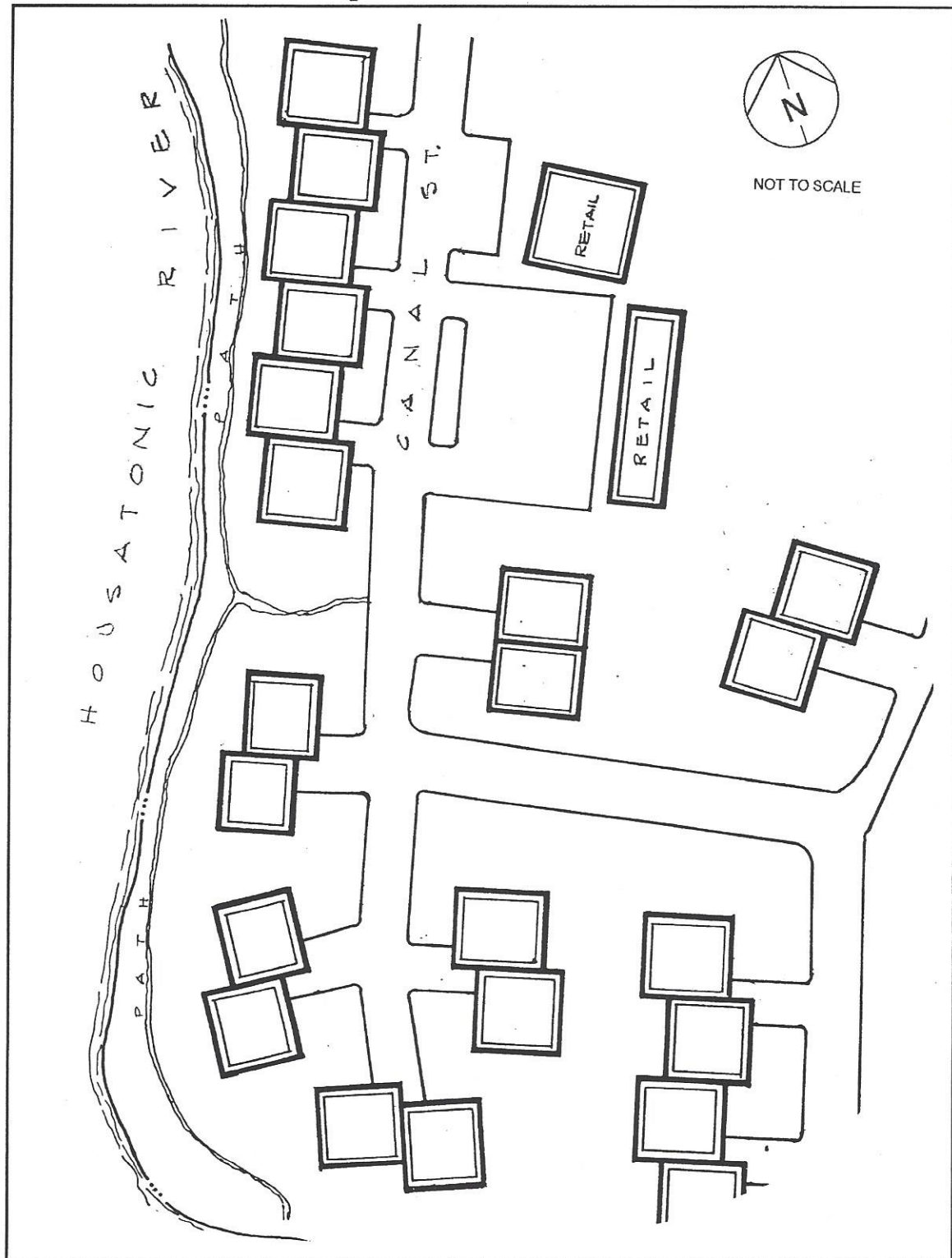
8.8.2. Encourage the development of innovative types of residential housing such as townhouses, condominiums, and clusters (see Figure 15). Adopt a new zoning ordinance that encourages multi-family dwellings and higher densities of single-family units. It is recommended that a density of no less than eight units per acre be required. This will help

recreate the tightly woven characteristics of the neighborhoods surrounding the Downtown.

- 8.8.3. Strive to reactivate the scenic railroad line. As well as providing a tourist link to the surrounding towns of Lenox, Stockbridge and Becket, the railway can also be a source of economic benefit to the Downtown.

Figure 15

Concept Plan: Townhouse Clusters



8.9. District Eight

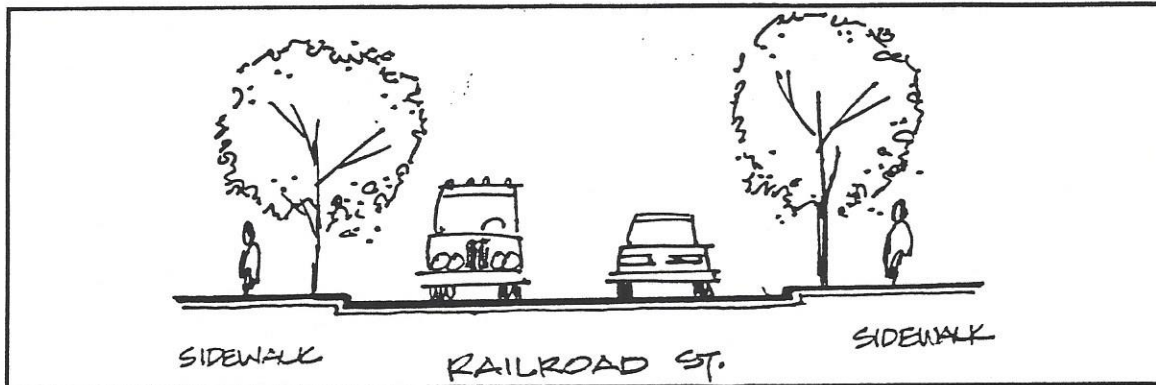
This district is primarily commercial with scattered residential uses. The lumber yard, the Chambery Inn and "The Station" restaurant are the prominent uses in this area. The following recommendations apply to District eight:

- 8.9.1.** Encourage revitalization and reinvestment of existing commercial and residential properties. The Town, L.E.A.D. or the Chamber of Commerce should provide property owners with financial assistance and development incentives to encourage the revitalization and rehabilitation of existing structures.

- 8.9.2.** Enhance the aesthetic quality of this area. This economically vibrant area needs physical improvement to promote aesthetic integrity. Railroad Street and its adjacent sidewalks need upgrading and reconstructing (see Figure 16). This will encourage pedestrian safety and will provide a stronger spatial definition between the street and sidewalk.

Figure 16

Concept Plan: Railroad Street



8.9.3. Identify and target properties for the Facade Enhancement Program.

The L.E.A.D. facade improvement program should be extended to this area. The former Town Hall is a historically significant structure and is worthy of preservation. The following structures are recommended to be improved under the facade improvement program: buildings on Lots #107, 119, 120, 124, 126, 127, 129, 132, (Tax Assessor's Map #12A).

8.9.4. Encourage the Lumber Yard to improve and enhance the physical appearance of their facility. The Town or L.E.A.D. should work closely with the existing owners to develop and implement structural and aesthetic improvements, while maintaining the economic function of the lumber yard.

8.10. District Nine

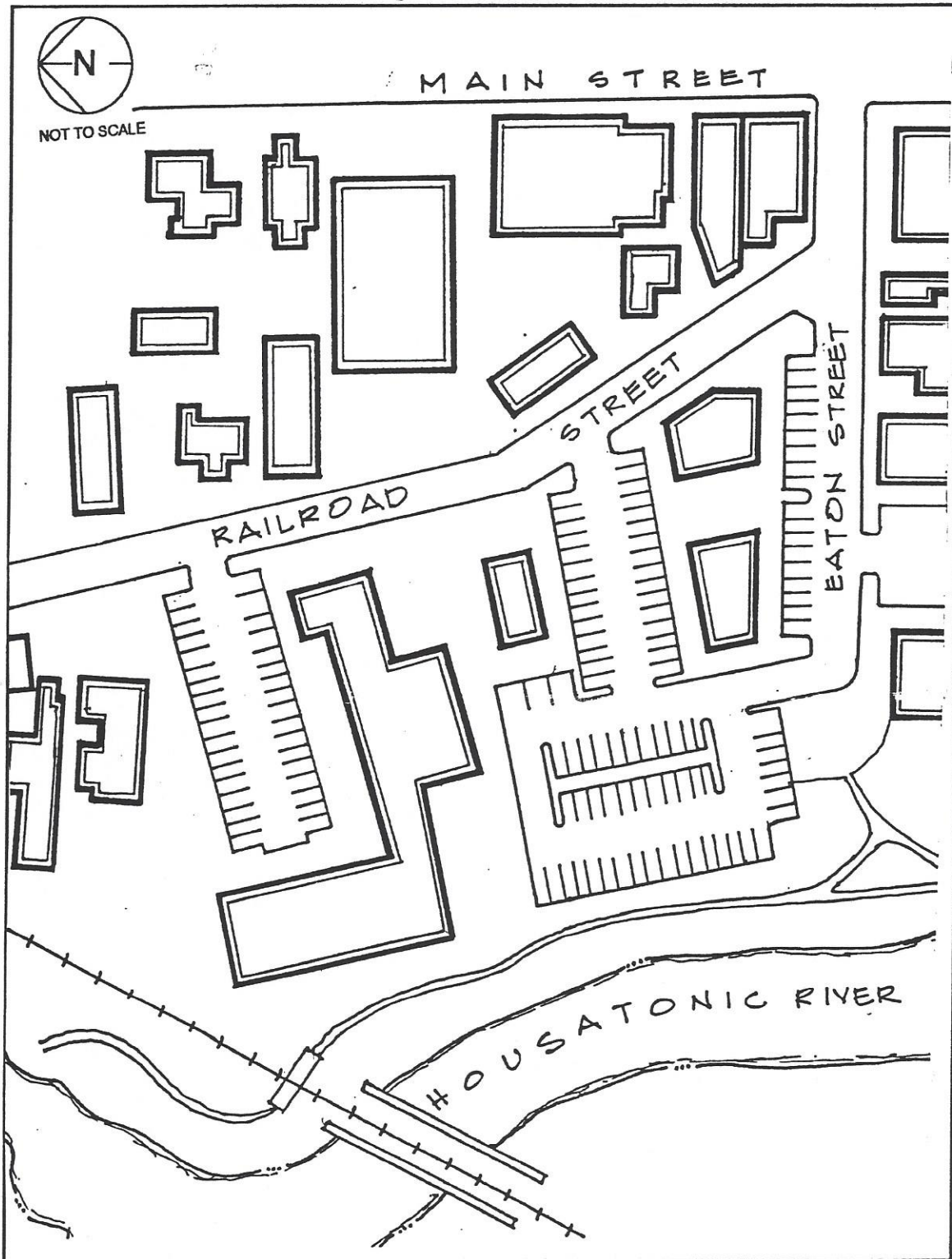
This district contains the municipal parking lot, the Post Office and various commercial uses. The following recommendations apply for District Nine:

8.10.1. The top priority should be the redesign of the parking lot for increased efficiency and aesthetics (see Figure 18). The existing parking lot can be described as a "sea of asphalt". There is a lack of spatial definition which results in inefficient use of the facility. It is recommended that this parking lot be redesigned to incorporate landscaped islands which can create spatial definition as well as mitigating the negative impact of the extensive paving.

8.10.2. Relocate the existing DPW facility to a site outside of the Downtown on Route 102. The Town should work closely with the appropriate State agencies to determine whether funding is available for this project.

Figure 17

Concept Plan: District Nine



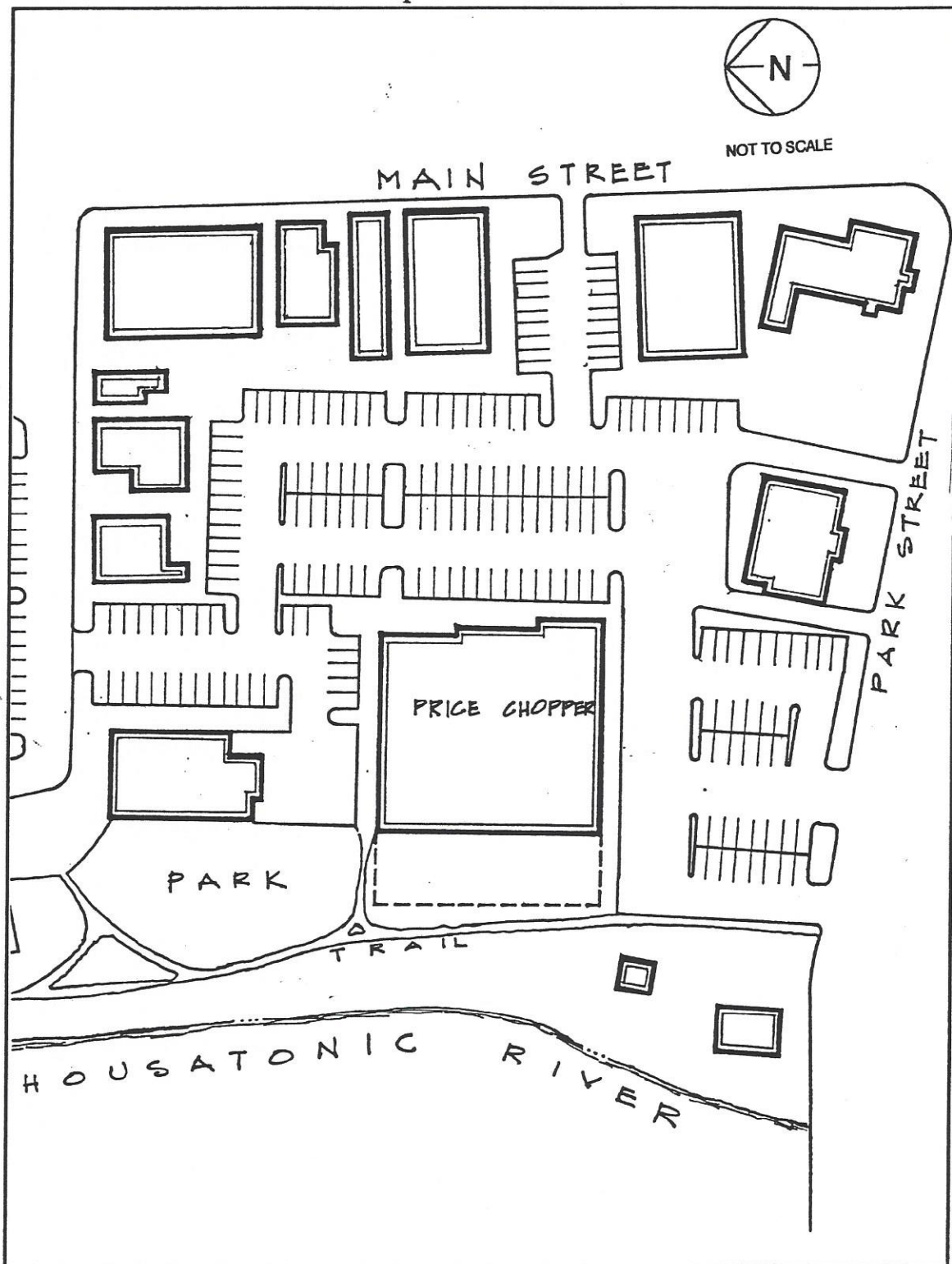
- 8.10.3.** Encourage the expansion and development of existing and new businesses. The Town should implement and adopt the necessary zoning and development incentives to encourage the expansion of existing businesses and the establishment of new businesses in this district. A desire has been expressed in public forums to develop a community center at the DPW site. A Committee, comprised of representatives from the various recreation interests in the Downtown, should be established to explore the feasibility of such a project.
- 8.10.4.** Improve the pedestrian and vehicular circulation. Many pedestrian and vehicular amenities, such as sidewalks and street curbing, which exist through the Downtown are absent from this area. This leads to confusion and safety hazards for both pedestrians and vehicles. Sidewalk and street curb construction should be compatible with the sidewalk program occurring along Main Street.
- 8.10.5.** Look into the creation of a park along the Housatonic River (see Chapter VI).

8.11. District Ten

This district includes the Price Chopper Supermarket and associated parking lot, commercial and residential uses. The following are a list of recommendations which apply to District Ten:

- 8.11.1. Redesign and reconfigure the existing Price Chopper parking lot (see Figure 19). This lot lacks spatial definition and is confusing. Currently, it serves the needs of several businesses. This redesign effort should incorporate the Lee National Bank lot, the Post Office parking area and the large parking area adjacent to Railroad Street in order to develop a more effective system of parking and traffic flow. The points of ingress and egress should be studied to improve efficiency. The existing entrance into the Price Chopper lot from Main Street should be either closed or restricted to a one way exit only (refer to District Two for more information). The present entrance off Park street should be upgraded and used as the primary point of ingress-egress into the parking lot.
- 8.11.2. Restrict the existing point of access to and from the Price Chopper parking lot, from Eaton Street to through-traffic, except for emergency purposes. This will create a more efficient flow of traffic and improve pedestrian safety within the parking lot.
- 8.11.3. Create a strong pedestrian linkage between Eaton Street and Main Street. It is recommended that a pedestrian walkway be developed in conjunction with the redesign of the existing parking lot and the proposed vehicular restrictions from Eaton Street. This walkway will

Figure 18
Concept Plan: District Ten



provide an efficient and pleasant manner in which to travel from the Housatonic River Park to the pocket park on Main Street.

- 8.11.4.** Examine the expansion and/or physical improvements to the exterior of Price Chopper. The Town should work with the owners of Price Chopper to assist and encourage in any efforts which result in expansion and improvements. Improved landscaping on the exterior of the building is also recommended.

8.12 District Recommendations Matrix

This matrix summarizes the district projects described in Chapter IX. A Priority has been assigned to each project: Short-term/implement within one year or Medium-term/implement within two-years.

District One

Project	Gateway South
Who	L.E.A.D./Town/First Congregational Church
What	New signs, improved landscaping
Where	Intersection of Main and Park Street
Why	Improve southern entrance to the Downtown
When	Short-term

Project	Traffic Improvement
Who	Traffic Commissioner/D.P.W./L.E.A.D.
What	Intersection improvements, traffic islands
Where	Intersection of Main and Park Street
Why	Improved traffic flow, vehicular and pedestrian safety
When	Short-term

Project	Common Enhancement Program
Who	L.E.A.D./Town/First Congregational Church
What	Aesthetic and functional improvements
Where	Lots # 77A/18A
Why	Improve appearance and maximize potential
When	Short-term

District Two

Project	Outdoor seating area
Who	Business owners/Town/L.E.A.D./Chamber of Commerce
What	Encourage the establishment of outdoor cafes
Where	Areas adjacent to existing restaurants
Why	Create a sense of vibrancy and liveliness
When	Short-term

District Two (cont.)

Project	Parking Improvement
Who	L.E.A.D./Town/D.P.W./Businesses
What	Reconfigure/redesign ingress, egress
Where	Price Chopper/First Nat. Bank of Lee/P.O. parking lot/ Assessors Map #18A, Lot #61
Why	Improve circulation and management
When	Short-term

Project	Bookless Building
Who	Building Owner/L.E.A.D./Town
What	Redevelopment of vacant upper stories
Where	Lot # 76/18A
Why	Maximize potential
When	Medium-term

Project	New parking lot
Who	Town/L.E.A.D./D.P.W./Traffic Commissioner
What	Develop vacant lot into municipal parking
Where	Behind Bookless Building, lot # 78, 43, 44/18A
Why	Increase Downtown parking capacity
When	Medium-term

District Three

Project	Enhancement of alleyways/linkages
Who	L.E.A.D./property owners/Town/D.P.W.
What	Improve landscaping and paving
Where	Alleys connecting Main Street to Railroad Street
Why	Pedestrian linkage
When	Medium-term

District Four

Project	Re-use of vacant building
Who	Property owner/Chamber of Commerce/ L.E.A.D./ Town
What	Sale/lease for re-use
Where	Lot # 179/12A
Why	Vacant
When	Short-term

District Four (cont.)

Project	Catholic Church parking lot
Who	Catholic Church
What	Screen parking lot on Main Street
Where	Lot # 129/12A
Why	Improve streetscape
When	Short-term

District Five

Project	Economic revitalization district
Who	L.E.A.D./Town/Business owners
What	Official designation of area as an ERD
Where	District Five
Why	Strengthen economic base
When	Medium-term

Project	Infill of vacant lot
Who	Property owner/L.E.A.D./Town
What	Examine the development potential of this lot
Where	Lot # 113/12A
Why	Vacant
When	Medium-term

Project	Intersection improvement
Who	Traffic Commissioner/D.P.W./L.E.A.D.
What	Landscaping and road improvements
Where	Main Street/Center Street intersection
Why	Improve safety and aesthetics
When	Short-term

Project	Investigate potential for public parking
Who	L.E.A.D./property owner
What	Negotiate deal with property owner
Where	Lots # 109, 64/12A
Why	Add parking at North end of the Downtown
When	Medium-term

District Six

Project	Gateway North
Who	L.E.A.D./Town/Property owners
What	Landscaping, facade improvements
Where	Along Center Street
Why	Define northern entrance and link to rest of Downtown
When	Short-term

Project	Expand historic district
Who	Historic District Commission/L.E.A.D./Property owners
What	Historic district status
Where	Entire district six
Why	Preserve and enhance character of district
When	Short-term

District Seven

Project	Neighborhood Revitalization District
Who	L.E.A.D./Town/Property owners
What	Encourage mixed-use revitalization and reinvestment
Where	Entire district
Why	Enhance appearance and to improve economic base of district
When	Medium-term

Project	Zoning change
Who	Town/L.E.A.D.
What	Investigate zoning change
Where	Entire district
Why	Promote neighborhood business and residential uses
When	Short-term

District Eight

Project	Neighborhood Improvement
Who	L.E.A.D./Property owners/Town
What	Landscaping, facade and streetscape improvements
Where	Entire district
Why	Aesthetic improvement
When	Medium-term

District Eight (cont.)

Project	Public Infrastructure Improvements
Who	L.E.A.D./D.P.W./Town
What	Sidewalks, curbs and street improvements
Where	Railroad Street
Why	Safety, aesthetics and to promote pedestrian use
When	Medium-term

Project	Scenic railway
Who	L.E.A.D./Railway owner/Town
What	Reactivate tourist train
Where	District eight
Why	Linkage with region; tourism, economic boost to Downtown
When	Short-term

District Nine

Project	"Sea of Asphalt"
Who	L.E.A.D./D.P.W./Town/Property owners
What	Reconfiguration and improvement of lot's efficiency
Where	Municipal parking lot west of Main Street
Why	Aesthetics, safety, improve management of lot
When	Short-term

Project	D.P.W. Building
Who	D.P.W./Town
What	Relocation
Where	To more appropriate location outside of the Downtown
Why	Highest and best use of public land
When	Medium-term

Project	Community Center
Who	L.E.A.D./Town/Lee Youth Association
What	Feasibility study
Where	D.P.W. site, lot # 44/18A
Why	Increase public activity in the Downtown
When	Short-term

District Nine (cont.)

Project	Infrastructure Improvements
Who	L.E.A.D./Town/D.P.W.
What	Sidewalk and streetscape improvements
Where	Entire district
Why	Safety, pedestrian linkages, aesthetics
When	Short-term

Project	Housatonic River Park
Who	Conservation Commission/ L.E.A.D./ River Initiative Group
What	Develop a park plan/greenway
Where	Along river
Why	Enhance open space and recreational opportunities
When	Short-term

District Ten

Project	Parking lot improvement
Who	Property owners/Town/L.E.A.D./Traffic Commissioner
What	Redesign for improved traffic flow and efficient parking
Where	Lot # 61/18A
Why	Management, safety and aesthetics
When	Short-term

IX. A DESIGN REVIEW PROCESS

9.1. Introduction

This section analyses the design review process and its applicability to Lee's Downtown. It is an effective tool for preserving the physical character of the community, a stated goal of this Master Plan. An overview of the process, suggestions for guidelines and comments concerning its implementation are also included here.

The prospect of the outlet mall and the general improvement of the regional economy are putting development pressures on Downtown Lee. For Lee to preserve and enhance its unique Downtown character, it must establish design review guidelines administered by a design review board. This board will consist of appointed members who serve to review applications for new construction, facade alterations, building expansion, new signs, and landscape, street or site improvements. The design review board, consisting of three to five people, should include design professionals, business people and residents of Lee. L.E.A.D.'s prominent role in the Downtown makes it a suitable candidate for initiating the design review process. Zoning regulations may need to be amended to reinforce design review guidelines, by specifying standards such as minimum and maximum front setbacks, street frontages, signage regulations, parking requirements and lot coverages.

Design guidelines can be developed to illustrate and encourage appropriate development in towns and cities. Using text and illustrations, these guidelines can be used to suggest design criteria and development approaches that respond to environmental, historical/cultural and visual conditions in

the community. While design guidelines are intended to be advisory and do not impose legally binding requirements, they do provide an outline of what is expected of developers and property owners regarding new site-plan proposals. To facilitate the understanding and use of the guidelines, they should be developed for each Downtown district, highlighting specific concerns (Shirvani, 1981).

The approaches to design review range from voluntary to mandatory. Most municipalities have opted for voluntary design guidelines, primarily because it is difficult to legislate aesthetics. Exceptions to this can be found in communities with a concentration of unique historic features such as the Art-Deco district of Miami Beach or Nantucket. In such cases, it is possible to prove that inappropriate design may adversely affect the economic vitality of these areas (Project for Public Spaces Inc., 1984).

Similar to design review guidelines, communities across the country have adopted "appearance codes" in an effort to improve design quality in the built environment. In effect, these codes are local ordinances that regulate the exterior design features of new construction or alterations. Appearance code criteria do not delineate specific design requirements, but rather outline performance standards. This allows for a variety in aesthetics permitting a certain amount of creativity within general parameters. The heart of the code establishes the criteria for appearance. It is here that performance standards are set. Many of the appearance criteria deal with scale and proportion for harmony and compatibility. Overall, the standards depend heavily on the subjective judgment of those who apply them. It is at this point that aesthetic legislation becomes most vulnerable (Glassford, 1983).

Nearly every community reviewed mentions some aspect of the police powers in their code so that the code promotes the public health, safety and welfare. Usually, some economic objective is also mentioned such as enhancement or preservation of property values. This language serves to justify municipal involvement in aesthetic matters.

9.2. The Design Review Board

The design review board is the administrative arm of the design review process. They advise and educate applicants, town officials and other boards on the functional and aesthetic suitability of proposed projects in the Downtown area. Any construction, alteration, demolition or removal that affects in any way the exterior appearance of the building or the building site are subject to the board's review. This includes but is not limited to: the kind, color, and texture of the building materials; the type, the design, and the character of all windows, doors, light fixtures, signs and landscaping (Town of Amherst, 1987). The following plans are usually required to be submitted to design review boards:

1. Scaled site plan
2. Landscape plan
3. Building plan
4. Street elevations

Lee's design review board should have the following goals:

1. Enhance the social and economic vitality of Downtown Lee by preserving property values and promoting attractiveness.
2. Encourage the conservation of buildings that have aesthetic or historic significance.

3. Prevent alterations that are incompatible with the existing environment or that are of inferior quality or appearance.
4. Integrate new development sensitively into the existing built environment.
5. Increase the presence and integration of diverse business, municipal, cultural and recreational activities in the Downtown.
6. Reinforce Downtown Lee's unique character to make it an inviting and memorable place where people are proud to live and happy to visit.

9.3. The Design Review Process

It is advisable to make the design review process part of the initial permit and application process. Care should be taken not to over-regulate the design procedure so as not hinder development. Guidelines which inhibit sensible development will only serve to have a negative impact on the economic health of the Downtown.

Developers appreciate and need clear guidelines. This lets them know what to expect in advance, guarantees them consistent treatment and serves to reassure them that any subsequent development in the neighborhood will meet minimum quality standards and protect the value of their investment.

The board can negotiate design compromises with developers in exchange for concessions related to community concerns. The following is an example of how some communities, frustrated by the limits of traditional zoning requirements, have sought to control design through an incentive approach. In Needham, Massachusetts, for example, eight "choiceful" guidelines have been established for sign design. These guidelines include such factors as compatibility with building design or enhancement of architectural elements. A sign committee appointed by the selectmen decides if the guidelines have been met. If four of the eight guidelines have been met by the applicant, the committee has the right to vary certain design

requirements. It may, for example, allow a larger sign than is normally permitted in order to achieve better design (Mackin and Krieger, 1989)

9.4. The Design Guidelines

Design guidelines are intended to be advisory and do not impose legally binding requirements. However, they do provide an outline of what is expected of developers and property owners regarding new site-plan proposals.

Design review guidelines from several communities were evaluated in the course of researching this Master Plan. The Town of Amherst, Massachusetts compiled a comprehensive and concise set of guidelines, which, since their inception in 1987, have clearly succeeded in maintaining the physical character of the town. This set of guidelines was used extensively in the preparation of this section of the Master Plan (Town of Amherst, 1987).

Various design guidelines which help to integrate individual buildings and facades into a meaningful urban fabric are:

1. Comparable Building Heights and Style

These will give the Downtown a unified skyline. For example, constructing a six-story, modern office building on Main Street would clearly be incompatible with the surrounding architecture and profile.

2. Proportion of Architectural Elements

The height to width relationship that expresses a building's stories or interior units should relate to adjacent buildings. Prior to the modern era, buildings were constructed with elements which emphasized their vertical proportions. These

included windows, doors, and other openings designed to maximize the impression of height while conforming to the prevailing height standards of the day.

3. Rhythm of Mass and Voids on Building Facades

Buildings should be designed to be physically and visually connected to existing structures in order to improve the continuity of form and activity. Such continuity gives the street a dynamic pattern of movement, which ought not to be interrupted by the use of incompatible forms, size spacing of windows or entries.

4. Shapes of Roofs and Windows

These should be consistent on each facade and relate to adjacent buildings.

5. Human Scale of Building and Street Elements

This would include the use of street furniture and entry ways designed for human proportions. The greater the amount of ornamentation and reduction of surface through the use of color, texture, and decoration, the more likely the building will appear to have a human scale. This will make the streetscape a pleasant and exciting place for the pedestrian. Open spaces, entryways, windows, porches, sculpture and benches should be intimate, not intimidating or monumental.

6. Landscape and Streetscape

This includes the topography, planting, and paving patterns which give continuity and definition to the street and pedestrian areas. A streetscape without variety is dull and lifeless. The Streetscape Improvement Program is presently addressing this component of the Downtown. Landscape design standards could specify certain species. It is important to local people that landscaping capture and reinforce the spirit of the natural landscape. Strong emphasis can be placed on the selection of indigenous species of trees, shrubs, and flowers. Design concepts should also relate to overall building characteristics, such as maximum and minimum height, roof shape, roof

pitch and materials. Development standards should reflect the special features in each type of area.

7. Directional Dominance of Horizontal Versus Vertical Features

Cornice lines, pilasters, and window arrangements function to organize the individual structures within the street block. New construction or alterations should consider existing directional design features on adjacent buildings.

8. Details such as color, texture, materials, paving, light fixtures, sign lettering, and sidewalk displays

All external features should be visually compatible. They should reflect elements already existing in the Downtown and should blend to create a diverse yet unified street composition.

9. Compatible Signage

Signs should reflect the scale and character of the building and surrounding landscape while remaining subordinate to the overall streetscape. Choices of color, size, illumination and design should relate to the building's architectural style as well as to other signs on the street. Present sign regulations in Lee's zoning ordinance need to be readdressed. Signage criteria, which apply to Lee in general, need to be directed to specific needs within the Downtown districts (Town of Amherst 1987, 17-26).

9.5. Comments and Advice

Public participation is very important in establishing a set of design guidelines. In some communities, community recognition for good design has proven to be an important incentive to improve overall design quality. An annual Design Awards Program should be established in Downtown Lee in order to educate the public and foster design awareness. Preservation awards could be conferred for excellence in historic rehabilitation.

Once the design review board has been set-up, one of its first tasks should be the development of a design review booklet specifically for the Downtown. This booklet should be distributed at the time of the initial permitting process. Clear and concise text, accompanied by graphic illustrations, will provide explanations of design criteria and development intent. This serves to facilitate dialogue between developers and community leaders.

Some cautions and comments from suburban Chicago communities that have adopted appearance guidelines may be useful to other communities wanting to achieve a better environment for their citizens:

1. Develop clear procedural guidelines to give to every applicant. Clear communication from the beginning is essential to the process.
2. Make sure the design review body includes persons who have expertise in making aesthetic judgments; architects are particularly valuable.
3. Provide some procedure for conferring with staff and/or Board before final design.
4. Keep time delays to a minimum. The board should be prepared to hold extra meetings, if necessary to speed up an approval.
5. Be careful not to restrict creativity. Uniformity in design review should mean application of basic design principles, not conformity of design.
6. Efforts should be made to publicize the appearance review codes. In this way, developers will be aware of the codes and the community will benefit from an awareness of the built environment. Yearly design awards are a good way to build pride and awareness (Glassford, 1983).

X. TWO VISIONS FOR THE YEAR 2010

10.1 Vision One

Lee will have a strong Downtown. The historic and architectural resources of the Downtown will be preserved. A mix of civic, cultural and community-oriented uses and activities will contribute to this sense of community character. The Housatonic River Park has proven to be a popular gathering place for townspeople and tourists alike. Adjacent to the park, the community center provides recreational opportunities for young and old. With ample, well organized, off-street parking and increased open space use, the Downtown continues to be a place for commercial, residential and civic activities in true New England tradition. Buildings are fully occupied with viable year-round businesses offering a full-line of quality products and service choices for local and regional consumers.

Thanks to a well conceived design review process, the historic architecture, the compactness and the scale of the area have been protected and enhanced. The present mix of businesses: banks, insurance companies, restaurants, shops and other retail uses have been retained and enhanced by complimentary new businesses.

This vision relies on the involvement and cooperation of Lee's citizens who decided that Downtown Lee deserved to be maintained and enhanced as a special place.

10.2. Vision Two

Lee's Downtown has lost much of its former unique community character. Due to a lack of a design review process, many of the historic buildings along Main Street have been demolished and replaced by structures lacking in distinctive architectural identity. A hodge-podge of architectural styles dominates the Streetscape resulting in confusion rather than cohesion.

The success of the outlet mall has negatively impacted the Downtown, which is now largely composed of franchises and specialty boutiques catering to tourists. Municipal uses have moved to the outskirts of the Downtown and local residents are now more dependent on the automobile for carrying out their daily tasks.

A pizza shop and a virtual reality arcade now cover the site where formerly there were plans for a riverside park. Traffic congestion in the Downtown, once a seasonal problem, now results in daily gridlocks. Confusion in the "sea of parking" persists. Many Downtown residents have relocated due to problems of noise pollution and traffic congestion.

This vision occurred because apathy prevailed and the Downtown changed according to the wishes of outside developers and not the residents of Lee.

This Master Plan provides a framework to guide Lee's Downtown through change. It is now the responsibility of Lee's residents to determine which path the Downtown will take.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEWS

The following informal interviews were conducted in the preparation of this Master Plan.

Historic District Commission

Since March 26th 1976 Lee's Historic District has been on the National Register of Historic Districts. The district extends from the Common at the South end of Downtown to the public library on Main Street. This lower Main Street Historic District can apply for tax incentives, grants and funding.

The Berkshire Regional Planning Commission recently contacted the Historic Commission and proposed a half mile extension for the Historic District along Housatonic Street (part of the Jacob's Pillow Trail). The State and local Historic Commissions support this idea, however there appears to be little backing from the residents in this area.

It will be necessary for the Historic Commission to confirm that the properties in this area are on the Town of Lee's Historic Inventory, recorded at the Assessors Office. This inventory is also registered with the Massachusetts Historic Commission. Once these steps are taken Historic District status can be conferred.

Presently the Historic District Commission is working on a Historic Plaque Program to designate structures within the district.

Regional Planning Agency

The Berkshire Regional Planning Agency compared Great Barrington, North Adams and Stockbridge with Lee. Lee has the smallest population among these four communities, but unlike the others, has a relatively healthy industrial base. Like Lee, Great Barrington and North Adams are working on Downtown studies funded by CDBG grants. Sprawl is a problem throughout the county. Stockbridge has managed commercial growth very successfully, by restricting retail to their downtown. However, Stockbridge and Lenox have become very tourist oriented and their downtowns no longer serve local needs.

The outlet mall is expected to have an impact on Lee's Downtown. Unlike other towns in the region, Lee's Downtown is intact. The plans and programs, presently being undertaken, are steps in the right direction towards the preservation of its authenticity and character. The Berkshire Regional Planning Commission also recommended the following:

- Improve the organization of Downtown parking.
- Establish financial incentives to retain local businesses.
- Extend the Historic District along Housatonic Street.
- Enact a local preservation by-law, prohibiting the alteration or destruction historic structures. The Regional Planning Commission regards this measure as the most important tool for keeping the Downtown intact.
- Retain retail uses and governmental functions (especially the Post Office) in the Downtown. Commerce and civic uses are critical to the vitality of the Downtown.

Housatonic River Initiative/Conservation Commission

This interview focused primarily on the Housatonic River and its role in the Downtown. The Housatonic River Initiative Group was established to oppose a proposed power plant on the River, close to the Downtown. In the past, funding for river related issues has been oriented towards pollution clean-up. Today, more funds are being devoted to the development of recreational opportunities.

The Housatonic River, as a whole, is less polluted today, due to the efforts of local and state environmental groups. For example, a "Source to Sound" clean-up in 1994 mobilized 4,000 people. This resulted in the removal of two tons of garbage from the River. PCB contamination continues to be a focus of clean-up efforts along the River. The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) have provided \$120,000 in funding for the River Initiative Group to be used for additional clean-up, development of recreational opportunities and staffing. General Electric has also agreed to contribute to clean-up efforts, however, there needs to be increased involvement by other local industries. In general, public reaction to the efforts of the River Initiative Group have been extremely positive.

The Lee Land Trust is gaining membership and momentum, increased citizen participation is recommended. The Conservation Commission also has resources for River improvements.

Other comments which emerged from this interview:

- Two contractors have volunteered to help in the construction of observation decks along the River.
- Landscaping efforts throughout the Downtown need to be increased, particularly on the Common and in the empty lot next to the Public library.
- Efforts to get Lee's young people involved in Downtown beautification programs have been successful in the past and should be pursued in the future.
- Lee should continue to investigate opportunities for developing canoe-access along the River, close to the Downtown.
- A greenway along both sides of the river, in the vicinity of Downtown would be an important ingredient in Lee's open space and recreational system.

APPENDIX B
FINANCING RESOURCES

Federal Resources

Economic Development Administration

Contact: Thomas O'Neil
Address: 10 Causeway Street, Room 240
Boston, MA 02222
(617) 565-7235

The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development

Contact: Robert Paquin, Deputy Director
Address: Office of Community Planning and Development Division
The United States Department of
Housing and Urban Development
10 Causeway Street, Third Floor
Boston, MA 02222
(617) 565-5345

State Resources

Community Development Finance Corporation

Address: Community Development Finance Corporation
Suite 600
131 State Street
Boston, MA 02109
(617) 742-0366

Massachusetts Government Land Bank

Address: Massachusetts Government Land Bank
One Court Street, Suite 200
Boston, MA 02108
(617) 727-0366

Department of Environmental Management

- *Open Space Aquisition Funding Sources*

Contact: Bob Wilbur (Extension 553)
"Greenways Grant Program"

Address: 100 Cambridge Street
Room 1404
Boston, MA 02202
(617) 727-3160

Fax : (617) 727-2630

Contact: Joel Lerner (Extension 290)
"Self-Help Fund"
"Land and Water Conservation Fund"
Address: Division of Conservation Services
100 Cambridge Street
Room 1404
Boston, MA 02202
(617) 727-3160
Fax : (617) 727-2630

Contact: Rob Warren (Extension 361)
"Habitat Protection Fund"
Address: Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife
100 Cambridge Street
Room 1404
Boston, MA 02202
(617) 727-3160
Fax : (617) 727-2630

Funding Directories

- Massachusetts Financial Resources Directory
- Compendium of State Financing Programs for Housing and Community Development in Massachusetts

APPENDIX C

PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT

Many of the areas in the downtown are currently divided into small or awkwardly shaped lots, making desirable development unlikely or impossible. The concept of a Planned Unit Development (PUD), also referred to as a Planned Community Development (PCD) (Simonds, 1978, 185), can be beneficial to these areas. "Essentially it establishes at the start the types of uses to be included, the total number of dwellings, and a conceptual plan or diagram. The traditional restrictive regulations are waived, and each successive phase as it is brought on in detail is checked against the conceptual plan and judged solely on the basis of foreseeable performance." (Simonds, 1983, 165).

We have recommended the use of PUD's in areas which we feel would benefit from a more comprehensive development plan, irrespective of current parcel lines. The use of the PUD, when combined with appropriate amendments to the zoning regulations, will inhibit undesired development and encourage desired development in accordance with the town's conceptual plans for the area. Economic incentives such as increased density or a mix of uses are given to encourage the re-parcelization and redevelopment of the area. Some of the benefits are a beneficial mix of uses, conservation of open space, and efficient and orderly development.

APPENDIX D
EXAMPLES OF DESIGN REVIEW GUIDELINES

Reprinted with permission from:
The Building Improvement File
National Trust For Historic Preservation
National Main Street Center
Washington, D.C.

ARCHITECTURAL VARIETY

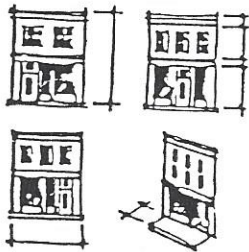


The traditional commercial storefront building can be considered the cornerstone of Main Street. Dating from the nineteenth and early twentieth century, these buildings share a remarkable similarity, a consistency which has strengthened Main Street as a whole.

With respect for its historic buildings, the traditional strength of Main Street can work yet today. But what about "less historic" buildings? Or changes already made to buildings? Do they necessarily detract from the character of downtown?

That depends. You will note that recommendations for new buildings (see guidelines sheet—NEW "INFILL" CONSTRUCTION) call for contemporary design, not fake history. In the same way, we would expect changes made over the years to mirror their own times. This reflects the growth and vitality of Main Street.

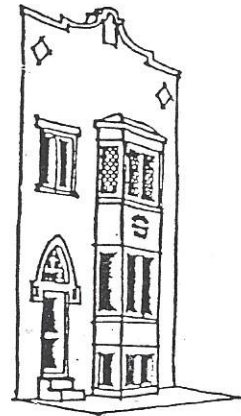
But new buildings are evaluated as they relate to their surroundings, as well as for the design itself. Height, width, relationship to the street, roof forms, proportion, composition, rhythm, proportion of openings, materials, and colors—these are ten criteria which should be considered in the design. By relating to the existing buildings, new construction can be a welcome addition to Main Street, rather than an unwanted intruder.



Similarly, the variety of architectural styles which exists along Main Street should be judged on their own qualities, not by age. Before you set out to make changes because your building is not "historic enough," see it for what it is and learn to recognize its own particular values.

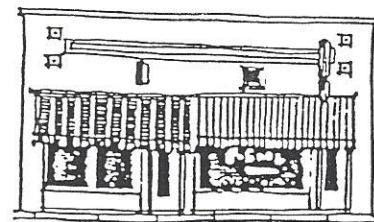
The same ten criteria can be applied to any existing facade to gauge its appropriateness with its neighbors. This compatibility is an important measure by which to judge the value and success of a Main Street facade.

However, there are other criteria as well. For instance, an unchanged historic facade is highly valued because it retains its original integrity. The same holds true, perhaps sometimes to a lesser degree, for an unchanged facade of any age. The 1940s and 1950s are as much a part of Main Street as the 1890s.



In most cases, regardless of age, many changes have taken place. If the resulting appearance is pleasing in proportions, composition, and details, then the facade is a visual resource for Main Street. It is not necessary to change a facade simply because it doesn't look historic.

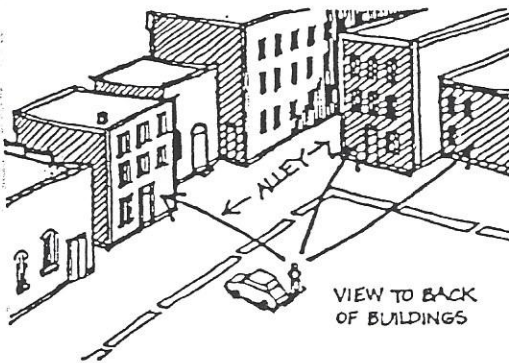
NEW CANVAS
AWNINGS AND
REMODELED
STOREFRONTS
FLATTER THE
EXISTING
FACADE.



REAR ENTRANCES

Spaces behind buildings are often forgotten. People tend to avoid them because they are usually unkempt and unattractive. Too often, these spaces have been strictly thought of as service areas, where deliveries are made or the garbage is picked up.

However, more and more parking areas are being developed behind the stores, in the middle of the block. The backs of the buildings are coming into full and open view.



This suggests two things:

- 1. The appearance of the back areas is important to the commercial district.
- 2. Rear entrances can potentially benefit all businesses. They allow direct entry from the parking lot to the stores. A customer does not need to walk all the way around the block to reach the store.

If you don't have an attractive rear entrance to your store, but are considering improvements, think about these issues.

1. Would added walk-through traffic help or hinder your business? Would a rear entrance be an added convenience to your customers?



2. What changes would you have to make to your store to get an attractive rear entry? How would you handle the circulation, displays, and security through the building?

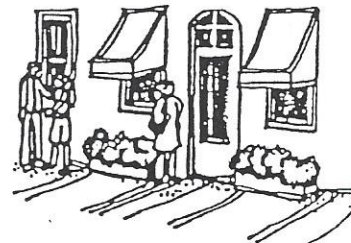
3. Although the two are similar, the rear entry should not compete with the storefront in importance. In most cases, the entrance should occupy a relatively small part of the rear facade and retain more of a utilitarian character. Still, it should be maintained and developed to support the overall appearance and convenience of the commercial district.



4. Like the storefront, the rear entry requires identification. It should be inviting and attractive. A window panel in the back door is one way to open your store to potential customers. A small sign on or near the door is another way to identify your store. Be sure to keep it small and don't clutter the area with too many signs.



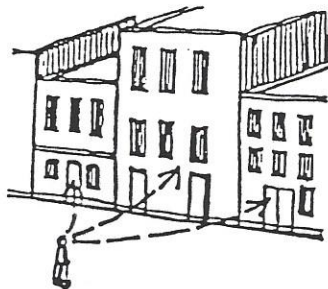
Open up a back window and use it for display. This too will help attract people to your door.



An awning can be a pleasant addition and a convenience to shoppers during inclement weather. If there is enough sun, planter boxes might also be added, but only if you attend to them properly.

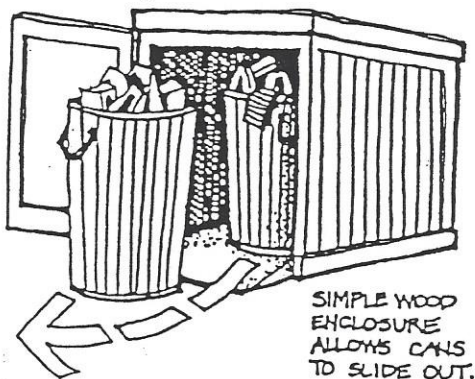
5. Like the storefront, the rear entry should respect its next-door neighbors. Try to make your entry compatible with neighboring stores. Look at the back entrance next to yours.

It might be wise for you and your fellow merchants to get together and plan out an attractive approach to the rear facades.



6. Normal service activities, such as trash collection, loading, shipping, and storage must also occur with ease. It is possible to accommodate these functions and at the same time make the rear spaces more enjoyable people places.

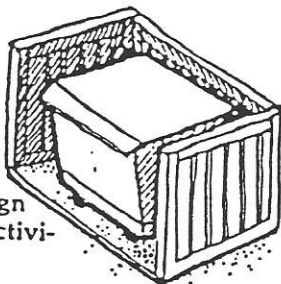
7. If possible, pick a central location for trash collection which will serve several stores efficiently. Grouping the containers makes them appear less cluttered.



SIMPLE WOOD ENCLOSURE ALLOWS CANS TO SLIDE OUT.

8. Simple enclosures can be readily constructed to hide refuse containers and prevent clutter. These enclosures should open from the front, allowing for easy removal of full, heavy cans.

Dumpsters can also be screened from view. Before construction, be sure to consult the collection agency and ensure that your design will not disrupt their activities.



A neutral color should be used to paint or stain these enclosures. Bright or loud colors will draw attention to the screens and containers, when the purpose is to camouflage them. Choose colors that blend in with those of the rear facade.



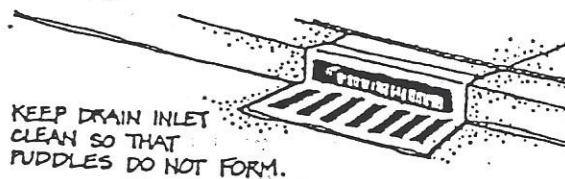
COLOR BLENDS WITH SURROUNDINGS.



COLOR DOES NOT BLEND.

9. Don't forget about the paved areas behind the buildings or in the alleys. Many times the paving is full of potholes, which is both bothersome and dangerous for pedestrians.

In addition to paving, watch out for drainage problems. Poor drainage causes puddles and other hazards for pedestrians. Make sure there is adequate drainage away from your building. Also check the drain inlet regularly for cleaning.



Weeds can also become a problem in poorly paved areas. Weeds are tenacious and will grow wherever they can. For a better image, keep them under control.



10. Snow removal is another consideration. Just as front walks need to be shoveled, remember to clear snow at back entrances.

11. The rear facades of commercial buildings have been ignored and neglected for a long time. Masonry has been left to deteriorate or has been poorly patched. Windows are ill-kept, boarded up or unwashed. With good design and proper maintenance, these rear entrances can become attractive and convenient for Main Street shoppers.

SIGNS

Signs are a vital part of any Main Street. With a sign, you call attention to your business and create an individual image. But it's often forgotten that signs contribute to an overall image as well. Merchants try to out-shout one another with large, flashy signs.

If Main Street is to work together as a whole, its signs must serve both of these images. Consider the following guidelines in selecting your sign:

1. Stand back and question the purpose of your sign.

Is it merely an identification?

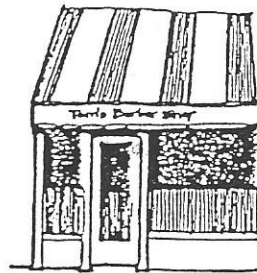
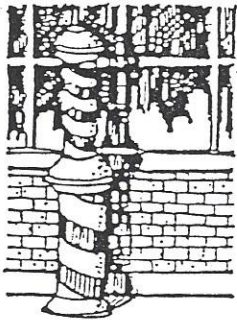
Do you want to let the personality of your store or office shine through?

Is it necessary to provide information about your products on a sign?

What kind of public are you trying to attract?

2. Consider the type of sign you want.

- *word sign*—This sign uses words to describe your business.



- *symbol sign*—Many times a recognizable symbol is more expressive than words.

- *object sign*—Often, objects used in your business can be attractively displayed. These visual signs can be more vivid than words.



Perhaps you'll want a word sign and a symbol sign, or any combination.

3. Consider all the possibilities for using different materials. Each has unique qualities which can be exploited for the type of sign most appropriate to your needs.

Signs can be made from wood, metal, plastic, stone, neon, canvas, paint on glass, paint on brick, etched or stained glass, and more.

4. You might want to look at pictures of how your building looked in the past. This will give you ideas about how signs were related to historic architectural details.

5. Visualize how your sign will appear in relation to the entire facade. The sign should not dominate; its shape and proportions should fit your building just as a window or a door fits.

For example, a sign hung under the cornice complements the architecture and therefore presents a strong image.



6. Decide where you want to put your sign. There are several options in deciding the placement:

- under the lower cornice
- painted on glass
- on the side of the building
- hanging from the building
- on the awning flap

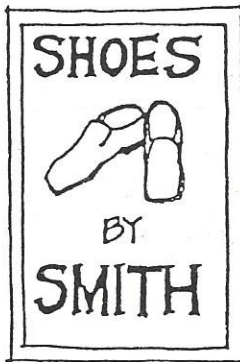
Some types of signs are *not* appropriate, including large hanging plastic signs and oversized signs placed on top of the building or applied over the upper facade.

7. Decide just how much you want to say on your sign. It is important to keep your message simple and to the point. Remember, your sign will be viewed as part of a very complex environment filled with written and visual messages.



8. Now step back and take a look at the color of your building and the colors you see on the surrounding structures. Take hints from these in selecting a color for your sign.

You will usually get the best results if you opt for a simple color scheme—a range of three colors. Avoid flashy, Day-Glo colors; they belong out on the highway!



9. Along with colors, lighting is important. If you illuminate your sign at night, the light source should be as inconspicuous as possible. Try to avoid flashy or gaudy lighting techniques which are merely a distraction.

10. Express the personality of your establishment in the lettering style you select. To get an idea about various styles, look at other signs around town. Think about what each style expresses about the business or product it advertises. Then you can define the image you want your sign to project.

There are three basic styles of type, with numerous variations of each. The Main Street Project Manager can help you choose and locate a style for your sign.

ABCD a b c d
ABCD a b c d
ABCD a b c

SERIF FACE

This is a historically appropriate style, with many variations from plain to fancy.

SANS SERIF
This is a more contemporary letter style, with cleaner, bolder lines.

ABCDEF
ABCD a b c
ABCD a b c d

SCRIPT

This decorative and more personal style was often used for signs painted on glass. (Both upper and lower case letters should be used in script style signs.)



11. Quality of workmanship and construction is as vital as any of these basic considerations. A simple, well-made sign speaks far better of your establishment than an extravagant sign that is sloppy in appearance. Choose a sign maker carefully. Ask to see samples of previous work.



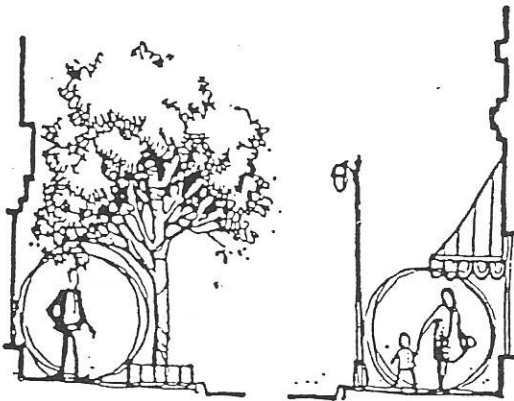
12. Signs provided by national distributors are not appropriate. They don't reflect the individuality of your store and usually appear as add-ons to your storefront advertising. The signs you display should advertise your personal business messages.

13. Now consider this idea. Your entire building presents an image that acts as a sign. The appearance of your building is more subtle than a word sign, but it can be more effective.

AWNINGS

An awning can be both a decorative and functional addition to your storefront. Colorful and bright, it also serves as an energy saver by regulating the amount of sunlight that enters your window. Under an awning, shoppers are enticed to stop, look, and step inside.

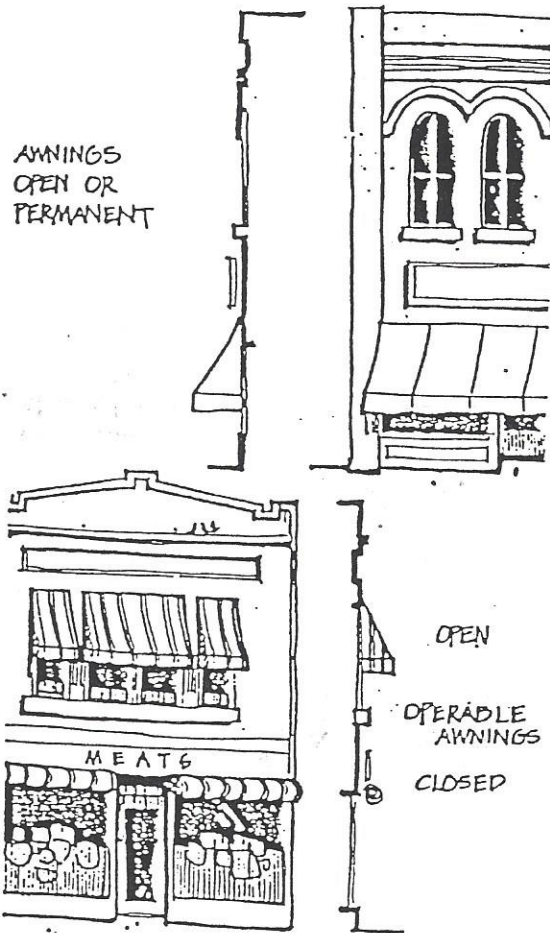
1. An awning creates a pleasant space in front of your building, like a city tree. It provides shade and shelter for busy shoppers, a resting place where pedestrians can stop away from the flow of traffic.



2. Awnings regulate the amount of sunshine which penetrates your windows. Based on your building's orientation to the sun—north, south, east, or west—you can determine awning needs.



3. The installation design will determine in large part how energy effective the fixture will be. Do you want an operable awning which can be opened and closed? Or do you want a fixed awning which remains permanently open?



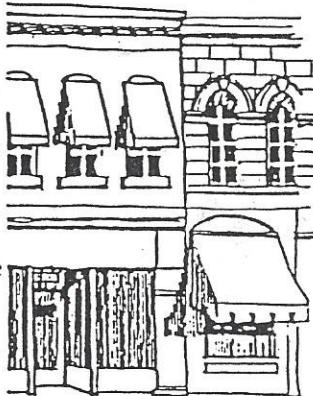
An operable fixture allows the sun to shine into your store on cold days. It shades your window when it is sunny outside. An inoperable, fixed awning is primarily decorative. Although less expensive to install, it does not always fulfill the major function of an awning.

4. As a visual element, an awning can add character and interest to your storefront. You should think about how it will appear in relation to the scale of your building. How will it relate to existing architectural features? Will it



overpower the proportions of your windows and facade? Look at your neighbors' buildings and imagine how the addition of an awning will affect the character of the streetscape.

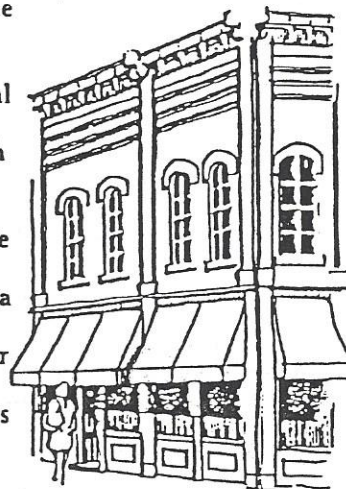
5. Awnings can be constructed from several materials. Canvas is traditionally popular. It is flexible, but must be weather-treated prior to installation. Although initial installation costs are lower, they may require more maintenance than plastic and aluminum.



6. Plastic creates a more contemporary effect. A vinyl awning can be very handsome, if designed with consideration for the rest of the building. This material is flexible, and generally requires less maintenance than fabric.

7. Aluminum is another possibility. Primarily residential in character, these awnings are usually unattractive and inappropriate in a downtown area. A flat aluminum canopy particularly detracts from historic character.

8. To decide on a color for your awning, take a look at the entire building. One with minimal architectural detailing can be "jazzed up" with a bright accent color. A more decorated facade should be complemented with a subtle shade. Choose the color so that your awning enhances the existing features.



9. Pattern is important too. Plain and simple, striped, or a bold solid—what image do you want to create? Again, choice of a pattern (or no pattern at all) should depend on the character of the facade.

DOORS

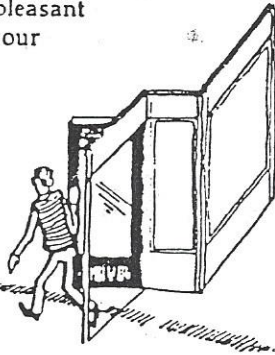


THE FRONT DOOR

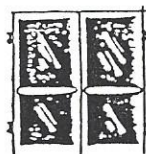
Historically, the storefront entry was more than just a door. Its design and appearance reflected its commercial importance. Tall and stately in proportion, and built of wood with a large glass panel, the traditional storefront door looked substantial, yet inviting to the customer.



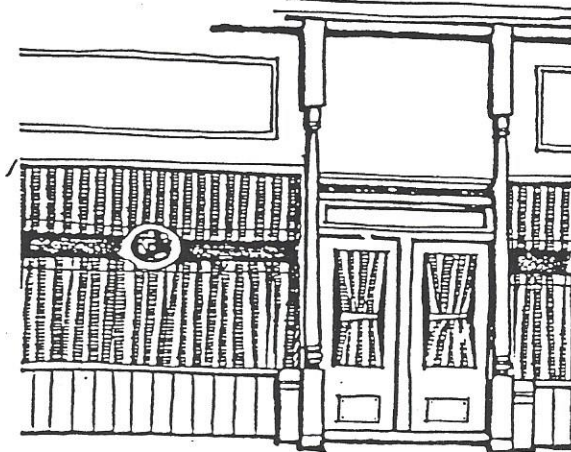
The idea of making the front door special is one that you should remember today. Entering your store should be a pleasant experience. You want your customers to feel a special invitation as they approach and open the door.



Original storefront doors along Main Street have become scarce. They have been replaced by the standard aluminum and glass commercial door. Although lacking in historical character, this modern door cannot be considered inappropriate. Its simple appearance makes it unobtrusive. However, if you want to enhance the personality of your storefront, you should consider other options open to you.



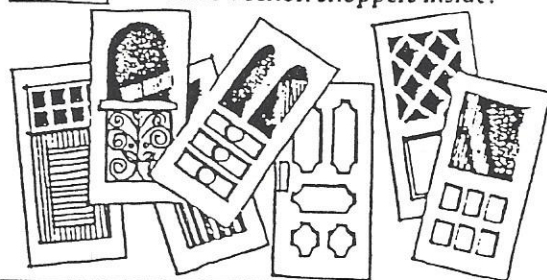
1. Your front door should look compatible with the rest of your storefront. It should be significant, but not outspoken.
2. If your storefront retains its original character, a traditional wood door with a glass panel (as tall as possible) will reinforce this



appearance. Try to find a salvaged older door to fix up or use a new door of the same design.

3. If traditional appearance is not a concern, make a careful choice of a door based on the total design of your storefront. Many door sizes and designs are available in both wood and metal. If you choose the standard aluminum and glass door, consider a dark, anodized finish rather than the metallic color. These are some new door designs which may be appropriate.

4. Avoid overdecorating your door. Most fake "historic" doors are decorated with designs, moldings, and window grilles that look out of place on Main Street. The same holds true for many contemporary door designs. The door should reinforce the character of your building, as well as beckon shoppers inside.

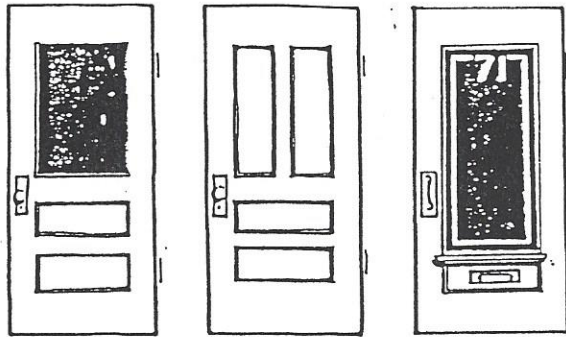


THE SECONDARY DOORS

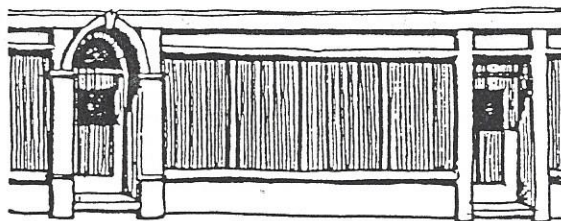
The typical Main Street building often had two additional doors: a second door on the front permitting access to the upper floors and a back door.

Compared to the main entrance, they were modest in design. If you are selecting new doors for these locations, you may find the following ideas helpful:

1. If you choose to maintain a traditional appearance, an old wood panel door is most appropriate.



2. Whatever your choice, these doors should be visually understated. The second front door should fit with the overall facade without drawing attention to itself. The back door should be practical in style to reflect the unadorned character of the rear facade. A fancy door would look out of place in these surroundings.



MAIN FRONT
ENTRANCE

SECONDARY
ENTRANCE

3. If you want to develop your back door as a customer entrance, think again about its appearance. No longer merely a service access, its design should reflect the change in function. The addition of a glass window will lend a new look for shoppers and passers-by. A cast iron grille can provide security and pleasing design.



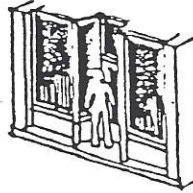
A NOTE ON MAINTENANCE

If any of the doors in your building are old, but workable, you should certainly consider keeping them. If they are wood, maintenance is very important. Keep them clean and in good working order. Since wood doors share many problems common to wood windows, see the guidelines sheet, UPPER STORY WINDOWS, for maintenance suggestions.

3. THE RECESSED ENTRY

The traditional storefront had a recessed entry at the front door.

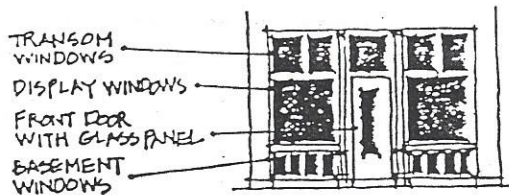
This configuration accomplished two important things. First, it kept the display windows right next to the sidewalk in full view of passers-by. Then, with the entry recess, it emphasized the door. The intimacy of the enclosed and sheltered doorway seemed to invite the pedestrian inside.



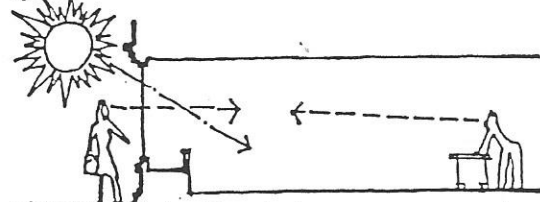
This is a simple and logical storefront design. Regrettably, many storefronts do not retain this form today.

4. THE STOREFRONT WINDOWS

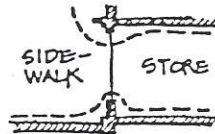
The traditional storefront was composed almost entirely of windows.



For very functional reasons, it was designed to be as transparent as possible. This allowed a maximum of natural light into the typically narrow, windowless store space and relieved the closed-in feeling. It also allowed the potential customer a full view into the store, both of the merchandise displays and the interior space.

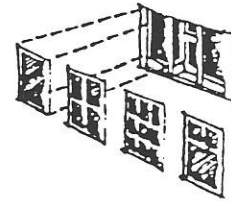


With this minimal barrier between store and sidewalk, the two seemed to melt into one. The store space became part of the public street, readily accessible to shoppers.



Many owners shy away from large storefront windows because of potential glass breakage. But the use of tempered glass can substantially reduce this problem.

Further, a large window that is *unobtrusively* divided (into two or three sections) is much less expensive to repair when one pane breaks.

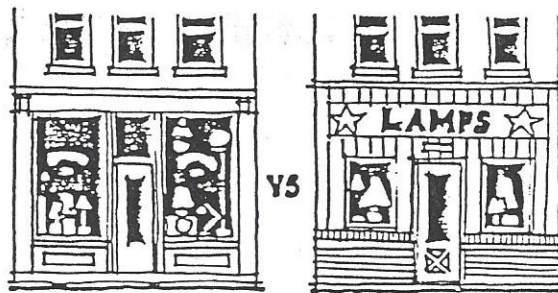
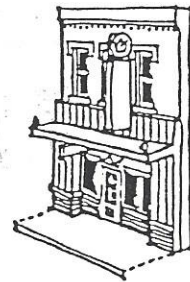


Although often ignored, the idea of a transparent storefront is as valid today as it was in the past. For this reason, it is recommended that future storefronts be designed with the largest possible window area.

5. STOREFRONT DECORATION

The design of the traditional storefront emphasized the display windows and entry door. Because of this, the storefront had only simple decoration. Shoppers were supposed to look through it rather than at it.

At odds with this traditional concept, many remodeled storefronts are heavily decorated. Loud colors, patterns, textures, and signs all grab for the customer's attention. They fight with one another and clash with the older portions of the facade. With all this decoration, a shopper barely notices the display windows.



Merchants are encouraged to adopt a new strategy for storefront design, based on the attraction of the goods and services inside. Less emphasis should be placed on decoration for decoration's sake and more on the potential of the window display. (See guidelines sheet—WINDOW DISPLAYS.)

STOREFRONT DESIGN

We have looked at the evolution of the traditional Main Street facade and seen that changes have been, and will be, concentrated on the storefront. Generation after generation, storefronts change while the upper facade stays the same or deteriorates or is hidden behind a screen.

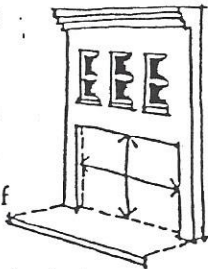
Because of its relatively permanent nature, the upper facade is primarily a maintenance/repair problem. The storefront, on the other hand, is a design problem.

If you wish to restore the original storefront, a little research may turn up historic photos of your building. A good place to start is at the local library, or by asking previous owners, or even by searching the building itself.

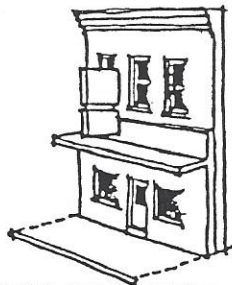
However, you need not necessarily recreate the exact historic appearance. The following are ideas to think about as you plan a change in your storefront. Each is founded in the traditional storefront; however, these ideas are not "historic" in nature. They are functional and aimed at making the storefront more attractive and accessible to shoppers.

1. KEEPING THE STOREFRONT IN ITS PLACE

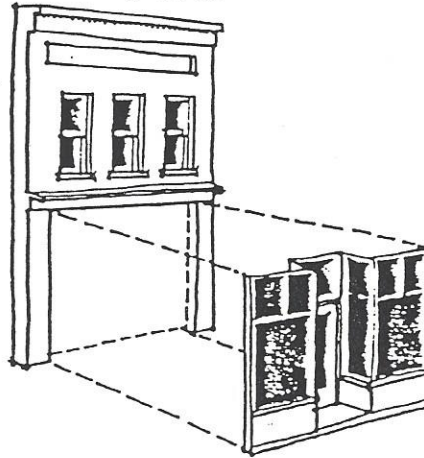
Every traditional Main Street facade has a well defined opening which the original storefront filled. It is the area bounded by a wall on either side, the sidewalk on the bottom, and the lower edge of the upper facade on top.



Many problems with the facades today are a result of this fact: the storefront has been allowed to stray out of its natural place within the facade. It no longer looks contained; instead it appears pasted on. One senses that the storefront is "out of control" in that it dominates the facade as a whole.

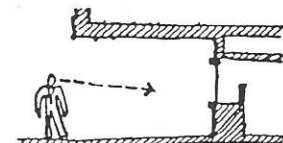
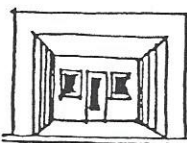
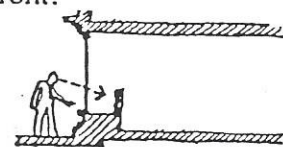


A general rule for future remodeling can be stated as follows: a storefront should be designed to fit inside the original opening and not extend beyond it.



2. THE SLIGHTLY RECESSED STOREFRONT

To emphasize this feeling of containment, a storefront might be set back slightly (six inches to a foot) from the front.



It is common to see a remodeled storefront recessed as a whole, but pushed far back (three to fifteen feet) into the facade.

A setback of this distance begins to isolate the storefront from the activity of the street. The pedestrian is not so tempted to stop, look in the windows, and step inside.

NEW "INFILL"

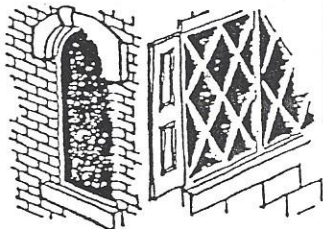
The construction of new buildings on vacant lots in downtown should be encouraged. Because this type of building fills in a "hole" in the existing environment, it is called *infill construction*.

The design of a new infill building, particularly its front facade, is a special problem. It should be designed to look appropriate and compatible in the midst of the surrounding buildings. Otherwise, the new building can look awkward and out of place.

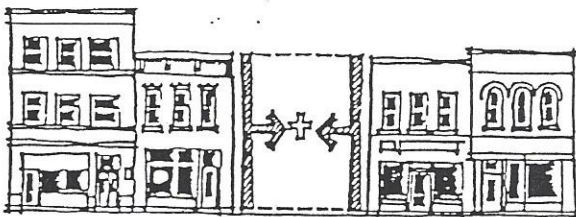
What is good infill design? There is no pat answer; a good design will vary according to its setting. Professionals generally agree that, since an infill building is new, it should look new. However, its appearance must always be sensitive to the character of its neighbors.

The infill facade should not pretend to be historic by mimicking too closely older facades. Often, pseudo-Colonial or Victorian details are added on a new building in an attempt to blend with older surroundings. This approach sel-

dom succeeds. It actually detracts from the character of an area by compromising what is truly old and historic.



The central idea behind good infill construction is a simple one. To a large degree, an infill facade should be designed by those around it. If the design of the new facade grows out of its neighbors, it is sure to be compatible.



This approach strikes a proper balance between the existing architecture and good contemporary design. The modern designer is allowed the freedom of individual talent—within limits.

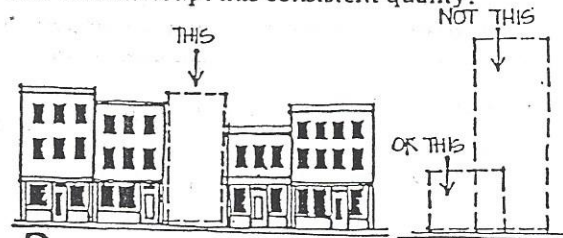
Since a good infill design will respond to its surroundings, it is not possible to develop specific guidelines which will apply to all cases. Every site has its own design problems.



There are, however, several general ideas which should govern the visual relationship between an infill building and its neighbors.

1. HEIGHT

Downtown buildings generally share a similarity in height. The infill construction should respect this. A new facade which is too high or low can interrupt this consistent quality.



2. WIDTH

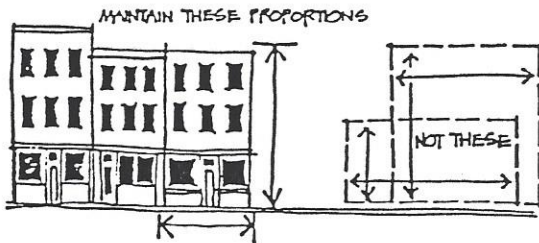
The infill building should reflect the characteristic rhythm of facades along the street.

If the site is large, the mass of the facade can be broken into a number of smaller bays.



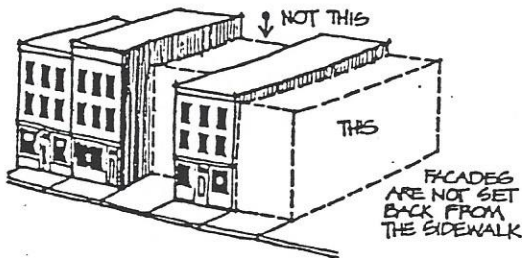
3. PROPORTION

The characteristic proportion (the relationship between height and width) of existing facades should be respected.



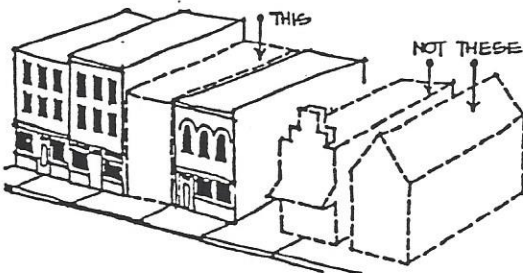
4. RELATIONSHIP TO STREET

The new facade should have a relationship to the street which is consistent with its neighbors.



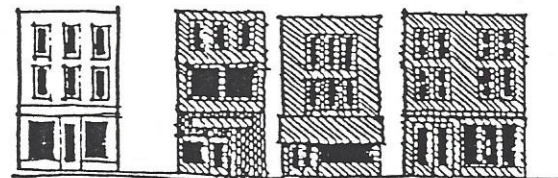
5. ROOFORMS

The type of a roof used should be similar to those found on adjacent buildings. On Main Street, this means a flat roof not visible on the front facade.



6. COMPOSITION

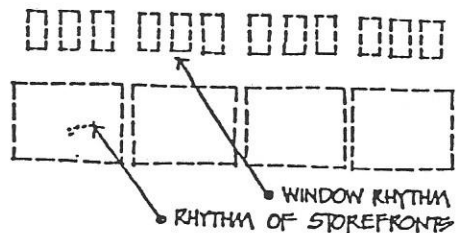
The composition of the infill facade (that is, the organization of its parts) should be similar to that of surrounding facades.



THIS
NEW BUILDING FACADES

7. RHYTHM

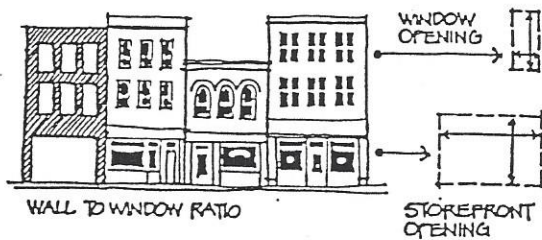
Rhythms which carry throughout the block (such as window spacing) should be incorporated into the new facade.



8. PROPORTION OF OPENINGS

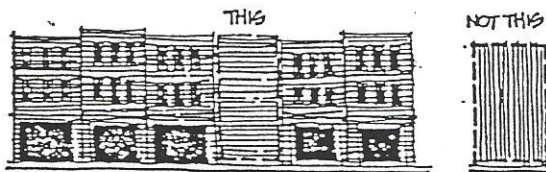
The size and proportion of window and door openings should be similar to those on surrounding facades.

The same applies to the ratio of window area to solid wall for the facade as a whole.



9. MATERIALS

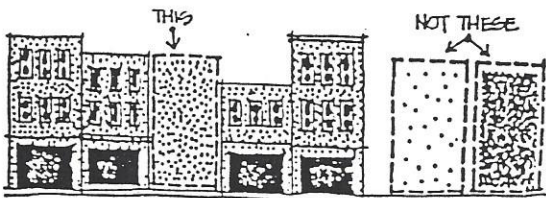
An infill facade should be composed of materials which complement adjacent facades. The new building should not stand out against the others.



EXISTING FACADES OF SIMILAR MATERIALS

10. COLOR

The colors chosen for an infill facade should tie it to its neighbors.



EXISTING FACADES OF COMPATIBLE COLORS

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